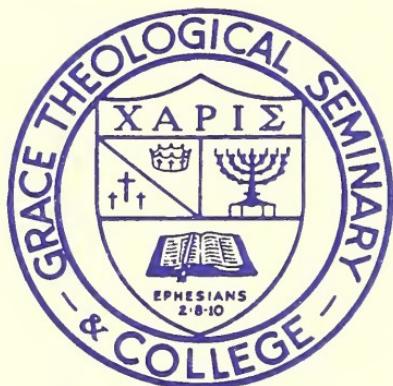


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PROVERBS 22:6a: TRAIN UP A CHILD?

TED HILDEBRANDT

Careful consideration of lexical and contextual factors suggests that "train up a child in the way he should go" needs to be reexamined. The verb "to train" really refers to a bestowal of status and responsibility. The noun translated "child" denotes the status of a late adolescent rather than a child. "In the way he should go" is best understood as "according to what is expected." The original intent then of this verse addresses a late adolescent's entrance into his place in adult society. This should be done with celebration and encouragement—giving him respect, status and responsibilities commensurate with his position as a young adult. This reinterpretation necessitates fresh application of the proverb beyond the concerns of childrearing.

* * *

"Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov 22:6). This proverb has brought encouragement, hope, anxiety and guilt to countless parents who have faced the uncertainty and confusion of child-rearing. It has provided encouragement to those responsible parents who, after working to balance family, relationships and careers, find reassurance that all of their labors ultimately will not be in vain. This verse has also provided rays of hope to those who, having reared their child in the best way they knew, have had their hearts broken as their child rebels and goes astray. They agonize under the pain that God recognized to be one of the deepest sorrows of human existence (Mt 23:37; Hos 11:1-2; Prov 10:1). To those parents this verse gives hope that when he is old the prodigal will return. Another group of young parents, sensitive to daily feelings of inadequacy, experiences intense anxiety over the possible long-term damage they see themselves doing to their child. If the child does go astray, this verse seems to point the finger of guilt at them.

Assuming that Proverbs 22:6 is a proverb, and not a promise,¹ the first question of interpretation must be: “What did this verse originally mean when it was recorded in the book of Proverbs?”²

עֲמַד: TRAIN UP OR INITIATE?

“Train up” is an initial verbal imperative, found only five times in the Old Testament. The tension between how this word is used elsewhere in Scripture and the alleged pedagogical, semantic component found in the translation “train up” (KJV, NASB, RSV, NIV, TEV [teach]) has been passed over by many commentators.

To Stimulate Desire

Since there are so few uses of עֲמַד in the Old Testament, many have overemphasized etymology and ignored the cautions that Barr has so clearly articulated.³ With the recent psychological concentration on needs,⁴ there has been a renewed emphasis on the alleged etymological root of עֲמַד, עֵד (palate),⁵ and on an Arabic cognate (*hanakun*: desire). The Arabic image is of a mother preparing date jam which is gently rubbed on the gums of a newborn baby, thereby enhancing the infant’s appetite for and ability to digest succulent condiments.⁶ Yet to suggest that the assumed etymological root determines or shades the meaning of the word in Proverbs 22:6 is like saying that when one uses the word “cute” it is shaded by its early

¹W. Mouser, *Walking in Wisdom* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1983) 13–14; J. Williams, *Those Who Ponder Proverbs: Aphoristic Thinking and Biblical Literature* (Sheffield: Almond, 1981); N. Barley, “A Structural Approach to the Proverb and Maxim with Special Reference to the Anglo-Saxon Corpus,” *Proverbium* 20 (1972) 737–50; “‘The Proverb’ and Related Problems of Genre-Definition,” *Proverbium* 23 (1974) 880–84; and the classic work on the proverbial form and nature of the proverb, A. Taylor, *The Proverb* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1931).

²A good example of the errors of putting application before interpretation is Proverbs 29:18, “Where there is no vision the people perish” (KJV). How this verse has been misused for “good causes”! Fortunately, most modern versions (NIV, TEV, LB, RSV) have changed this incorrect understanding.

³James Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968) 266–67.

⁴David Keller, “Child Discipline: A Scriptural View,” *The King’s Business*, (December 1970) 49, and J. A. Walter, *Need: the New Religion* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986).

⁵BDB (335) and KB (320) take עֲמַד as denominative from the noun עֵד (palate, gums, roof of the mouth). Cf. Gleason Archer, R. L. Harris, B. K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Moody, 1980) 301.

⁶Both BDB (335) and KB (315) link it to an Arabic cognate *hanaka* referring to the rubbing of the palate (gums = *hanakun*) of a child with oil and dates before he begins to suck, thus making the material more digestible and palatable (cf. also *TDOT*, v. 19f.; Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 6 [Grand Rapids: Wm. B.

Elizabethan root meaning of “bow legged.” Thus, it cannot be assumed that etymology determines current meaning/usage. One should be doubly leery about reading in a *suggested* etymology [חַנְקָה (palate) or hanakun (desire)] when none of the biblical usages has anything to do with such sensual, cuisinal nuances.

Another way of establishing this oral-appetitive meaning for חַנְקָה is on the basis of the use of פֶּה (mouth) in the idiom “mouth of his way” (דֶּרֶכְוֹ). This was possibly used for literary effect in Proverbs 22:6.⁷ Such an oral meaning fixation seems unlikely, however, in light of the apparent absence of such inferences elsewhere (Exod 34:27; Deut 17:10–11; etc.).

To Train

Most commentators accept, without discussion, the translation of “train up” as the meaning of the word חַנְקָה in Proverbs 22:6.⁸ By “train up” is meant the careful nurturing, instructing and disciplining of the child in an attempt to inculcate a wise and moral character. Such training is frequently mentioned in Proverbs (Prov 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13–14; 29:15, 17; cf. Heb 12:5f.). Consequently, this proverb is cited in support of a plethora of educational and developmental child-rearing philosophies, paradigms and programs.

The importance of early child training cannot be over-emphasized, particularly given the destructiveness of the absent/preoccupied-parent

Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973] 87). The nexus with Egyptian Execration text (2000 B.C.), hnkt, “tribute, offering,” or the Neo-Punic, hnkt(?), “memorial tombstone,” is doubtful, as Dommershausen observes (cf. Albright, “The Predeuteronomistic Primeval,” *JBL* [1939] 58).

⁷James Collins, “A Hermeneutical and Exegetical Examination of Proverbs 22:6” (M.Div. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1983) 29.

⁸Toy, *Proverbs* in ICC, 415; McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970) 564; Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs*, in the Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: University Press, 1972) 124; Bridges, *A Commentary on Proverbs* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1846) 402–4; Charles Fritsch, *Proverbs* in the Interpreter’s Bible (NY: Abingdon, 1955) 907; W. G. Plaut, *Book of Proverbs* (NY: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1961) 227–28; Edgar Jones, *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*, in the Torch Bible Commentaries (London: SCM, 1961) 183–84; Julius Greenstone, *Proverbs with Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Pub. Soc. of America, 1950) 234–35; T. T. Perowne, *The Proverbs* (Cambridge: University Press, 1916) 142; and Otto Zöckler, *The Proverbs of Solomon* in Lange’s Commentary (NY: Charles Scribner and Son, 1904) 192. Zöckler illustrates the point with several proverbs (“What little Johnnie does not learn, John learns never” and “Just as the twig is bent the tree’s inclined”). Similarly, modern experiments of Piaget (“The Mental Development of the Child” in *Six Psychological Studies by Piaget*, ed. O. Elkind [New York: Random, 1967]), categories of Erikson (*Childhood and Society* [New York: W. W. Norton] 247–74), and the work of others highlight the importance of early childhood training. Many affirm that 85% of the child’s personality is formed by the

syndrome that plagues American home life. However, until the original meaning of Proverbs 22:6 is explicated, we dare not jump to dynamic, family-focused, modern applications of the verse.

It may be suggested that the discipline/instruction view of חנוך is confirmed by a lone use in Aramaic concerning training for fasting on the Day of Atonement.⁹ Modern Hebrew uses synonyms like למד or English glosses like “education” and “apprentice/pupil”.¹⁰ In modern Hebrew, חינוך means “education.”¹¹ One wonders, however, if such later developments are based on an assumed interpretation of this verse, which has therefore affected the consequent use of this verb in modern times.¹² This verb and its noun forms do not occur elsewhere in Scripture with this discipline/instruction meaning. If instruction was the point, why were the more instructional and frequently-used wisdom verbs not employed (למד, מסר, שמע, ידע [Hi])? Or why were there not more generic verbs used (לקח, נתן) with the usual wisdom nouns attached (e.g., righteousness, wisdom, knowledge, discernment)?

One further tendency should be resisted in developing the semantic components of this word. Every nuance of the word should not be imported into its use in a particular context. Reich, for example, collects several divergent meanings of חנוך (dedication, discipline [train up], desire) and develops each of them in light of early childhood training. Such a technique is to be avoided as a violation of valid semantic theory.¹³

To Dedicate/Initiate

The four other occurrences of “train” (חנוך) in the Old Testament are in contexts of dedicating or initiating the use of buildings. This

time he is 6 years of age. Such findings, chaining early childhood to later life, are held to be supported by this biblical proverb (see e.g., Paul Meier, *Christian Child-rearing and Personality Development* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977]).

⁹Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim* (NY: Pardis Publishing House, 1950) 483.

¹⁰Even-Shoshan, Abraham. המילון העברי (Jerusalem: Qiryat Sepher) 800, R. Sivan and E. A. Levenston, *The New Bantam-Megiddo Hebrew and English Dictionary* (NY: Schoken, 1977) 91.

¹¹S. C. Reif, “Dedicated to חנוך,” *VT* 22 (Oct 1972) 501. Cf. Sivan & Levenston, *Megiddo Dictionary*, 118.

¹²This is not ignoring the fact that modern meanings may be helpful in understanding ancient words (vid. James Barr, *Comparative Philology*, 38–75, 223–37; W. Chomsky, *Hebrew: The Eternal Language* [Philadelphia: 1957] 206–30). Yet, it does make this writer a little reticent—fearing an anachronistic, semantic projection back into the text.

¹³William Reich, “Responsibility of Child Training: Proverbs 22:6” (M.Div. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1971) 27, 35–41.

dedication/initiation is usually accompanied by great celebration. Deuteronomy 20:5 talks about the initiation of a new house as the reason for a man's not going off to war. The parallel references in 1 Kings 8:63 and 2 Chronicles 7:5 are both in the context of the celebrations surrounding the dedication of the Solomonic temple. Reif follows Rankin when he observes that in Deuteronomy 20:5 the word should be understood as the “initial use of” rather than a formal dedication. Dedication is the moving of an object from the realm of the profane to the realm of the sacred.¹⁴ In ritual contexts, however, both dedication and initial use aspects are closely linked. Since the practice of dedicating houses is not found in the Old Testament or in the later Jewish religious traditions, the dedication interpretation seems less likely in Deuteronomy 20:5. The idea of “initiating the use of” is more consistent with the context.¹⁵

Reif carefully discerns the cultic use of **קָרְבָּן** in 1 Kings 8:63 (2 Chr 7:5).¹⁶ Here the cultic setting causes a coalescing of the idea of dedicating the sacred building with the idea of its initial use. While “make holy” (**שְׁמַרְךָ**) and “anoint” (**חִזְמַת**) may be more frequently and exclusively used in dedication contexts, they may be sequentially related to the meaning of **קָרְבָּן** (cf. 1 Kgs 8:63 and 8:64 where the inner court must be **שְׁמַרְךָ** before it can be **קָרְבָּן**). The LXX translation ἐγκαίνιζω—while etymologically stressing the idea of newness and initial use—has lexical glosses that favor the idea of dedication.¹⁷

This cultic initiation/dedication use is affirmed through the eight uses of the noun form **קָרְבָּנָה** which occur exclusively in cult object dedication celebrations (Num 7:10, 11, 84, 88; 2 Chr 7:9; Neh 12:27; Ps 30:1[title]). Again in Numbers 7, Reif carefully distinguishes that the “anointing” (**חִזְמַת**) and “consecrating/dedicating” (**שְׁמַרְךָ**) come before the “initial use” (**קָרְבָּן**) of the Mosaic altar (cf. Num 7:1, 10–11, 84, 88).¹⁸ Similarly, Psalm 30:1 is a song that celebrates the initial use of the temple rather than focusing on the dedication of the structure itself. It is interesting that the word for the feast of Hanukkah is derived from the same root and focuses on the Maccabean celebration of the initial use/rededication of the second temple after its being profaned by Antiochus Epiphanes.

¹⁴Reif, “Dedicated to **קָרְבָּן**” 495–501; O. S. Rankin, *The Origins of the Festival of Hanukkah: The Jewish New-Age Festival* (Edinburgh, 1930) 27–45, and Reif, “The Festival of Hanukkah,” in *The Labyrinth*, ed. S. H. Hooke (London, 1935) 159–209. Also Rashi (M. Rosenbaum and A. M. Silbermann, *Pentateuch . . . with Rashi's Commentary translated into English and Annotated* [London, 1929]; *Genesis*, 57; *Sefer HaShorashim* [Berlin, 1847] 111).

¹⁵TDOT, vol. 5, 20.

¹⁶Reif, “Dedicated to **קָרְבָּן**”, 497.

¹⁷BAGD, 214; LSJ, 469. Cf. Latin “dedicare.”

¹⁸Reif, “Dedicated to **קָרְבָּן**”, 497ff.

The same basic noun form is used four times in biblical Aramaic to describe the initial use/dedication of the second temple (Ezra 6:16–17) and of Nebuchadnezzar’s 90 foot image of gold (Dan 3:2–3). Jastrow also provides examples of the use of this word by later Jewish sources to describe the dedication of an altar.¹⁹

In summary, the root ַנְּחַנָּה is used as a verb four times other than in Proverbs 22:6. All four are in the context of the celebration of the initiation or dedication of a building (temple). The eight noun uses all have reference to the cultic initiation of material objects (altar/temple/wall). The four uses in biblical Aramaic parallel this usage exactly (idol/second temple). What is to be made of this data, which clearly does not favor the normal pedagogical reading of Proverbs 22:6 as “train up”?

אֲנָחָנוּ Analysis

The relationship between wisdom and the cult has been shown not to be mutually exclusive.²⁰ Nevertheless, importing cultic meaning (“to dedicate”) into a proverbial setting is problematic to those who are sensitive to wisdom as a literary genre. Several commentators have realized this problem yet have attempted to include the idea of dedication in their definition of training.²¹ The vast majority of writers, however, virtually ignore the above data and simply attach the meaning “train up” to the Hebrew term אֲנָחָנוּ with no further comment about the semantic bifurcation.

Barr²² and others²³ have indicated the hazards of carelessly carrying over components of meaning from one context into another. All of the above usages of אֲנָחָנוּ have inanimate objects (altars, houses, temples, walls) as their object. When the word has an animate object, it should not be assumed that the meaning will necessarily be homogeneous. For example, the meaning of the word “runs” will have a different set of semantic components depending on whether it is used

¹⁹ Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 483f.

²⁰ For an excellent study on the relationship of wisdom and the cult, vid. Leo Perdue, *Wisdom and the Cult* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977) 225–26.

²¹ Derek Kidner, *Proverbs* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1964) 147; Robert Alden, *Proverbs* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983) 160; Reich, “Responsibility of Child,” 32–35.

²² Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, (London: Oxford University, 1961) 144–46.

²³ Moises Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983); John Lyons, *Semantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1977); Eugene Nida, *Exploring Semantic Structures* (Leiden: Brill, 1975); G. N. Leech, *Semantics* (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin, 1974); F. R. Palmer, *Semantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1981); and John Beekman and John Callow, *Translating the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974) 90–100.

for something animate or inanimate: “the boy runs” or “the faucet runs”. The question becomes: what does חָנַךְ mean when applied to people? Jastrow provides several examples in postbiblical Aramaic where the term is used of the high priest, who is inaugurated, and Isaac, who was initiated (חָנַךְ) into the covenant on the eighth day.²⁴ In Genesis 14:14 there is a very important use of חָנַךְ where Abraham rescues Lot by sending out his 318 “trained” (חָנִיכִים) men. It would be a mistake to think of these men as novices. Rather they seem to be sent out as men who were strong, experienced and already initiated into military affairs. It is interesting that the Arabic root proposed under “desire” also may be read “make experienced,” which fits well the sense here.²⁵

Similarly, in the Taanach letters (Akkadian documents dating from just before the Amarna age [15th century BC]), Albright has found a complaint from Amenophis of Egypt that Rewassa of Taanach, in the context of mustering troops for war, had not sent his “retainers” (*ha-na-ku-u-ka*) to greet Amenophis. Thus both in Genesis and in the Akkadian Taanach letters the root חָנַךְ, when applied to people, refers to one who is initiated and experienced, having duties commensurate with his status as a military cadet who has completed his training. What makes this example even more inviting is that later in the Genesis 14 passage these same military cadets (retainers/squires) are called נָעָרִים (14:24).²⁶ The connection of חָנַךְ with נָעָרִים (young men) is significant because these are the same word roots used in Proverbs 22:6 which are usually translated “train up” and “child”.

Thus, while the term later acquired the meaning “to train” in a didactic sense (similar to לָמַד), it is better to see this word as having specific reference to the inauguration process with the bestowal of status and responsibility as a consequence of having completed an initiation process. In short, the word חָנַךְ focuses not so much on the process of training as on the resultant *responsibility* and *status* of the one initiated. This meaning of חָנַךְ in Proverbs 22:6 moves away from a strictly parental admonition for providing the child with good instruction. חָנַךְ will be returned to in order to show how this new initiation interpretation fits into Proverbs 22:6, after discussing the term translated “child” (*בָּעֵר*).

²⁴ Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 483f.

²⁵ TDOT, 20; BDB, 335; and Collins, 23.

²⁶ Albright, “A Prince of Taanach in the Fifteenth Century B.C.,” *BASOR* 94 (April 1944) 24–25. Cf. CAD, H 6:76. Note also that Montgomery, in working on the name Enoch (*hanok*), concludes that if it comes from the same root (Gen 5:24), it means “initiated” as one who walked with God (“Some Hebrew Etymologies,” *JQR* 25 [1934–35] 261). Similarly, Albright calls him “retainer (of God)” (Albright, “Predeuteronomistic,” 96).

נָעַר: CHILD OR CADET?

The second lexical problem that the interpreter faces in Proverbs 22:6 is how to render the term **נָעַר**. Who was this **נָעַר** that was to be initiated with celebration, status and responsibility? In this verse **נָעַר** is generally translated “child” (KJV, NIV, NASB, RSV, TEV, NEB, et al.) or “boy” (NAB). MacDonald, in a study based on an analysis of hundreds of Ugaritic and Hebrew usages, has demonstrated that the age-focused idea of “child” is insufficient for understanding who the **נָעַר** was.²⁷

Status

Looking at the contexts in which the word **נָעַר** is employed, three things immediately present themselves. First, the age span is so diverse that age cannot be the primary focus of the word. It is used of infancy: for a child yet unborn (Judg 13:5–12); one just born (1 Sam 4:21); an infant still unweaned (1 Sam 1:22); or a three month old baby (Exod 2:6). However, Joseph at 17—already a man in that culture—is also called a **נָעַר** (Gen 37:2). When he is 30 years old—surely beyond childhood—he is still called a **נָעַר** (Gen 41:12, 46). Thus, MacDonald is correct when he states that the renderings “child, lad, young man, and servant” are “inadequate and produce a totally false impression of the person involved.”²⁸ Second, the **נָעַר** is frequently active in strictly adult activities (war [1 Sam 17:33, 42; Judg 6:12, 8:20]; cultic priestly functions [Judg 18:3–6, 20]; special spy missions [Josh 6:22]; personal attendance on a patriarch, prophet, priest, king or son of a king [Gen 18:7; 2 Kgs 5:1–27; 1 Sam 1:22, 24–25; 2 Sam 9:9; 2 Sam 13:17]; or supervision of the whole Solomonic labor force [1 Kgs 11:28]). The term **נָעַר** is often applied to one who is designated as an **שִׁיר** (man) (2 Sam 1:5, 10, 13). While he may be a young male, the point is not his age but his societal status and resulting responsibility. Third, there are numerous terms that focus on the age of a young male when age is the point (**בֶן**, **יְלֵד**, **עֲלֹם**, **בָּנָה**, **זָקֵן**, **זָקָן**).²⁹ It is not merely with these terms that **נָעַר** finds its semantic field. Rather, it is equally at home with terms like **עָבֶד** (servant) or **זָקָן** (elder).

An upper-class role and societal status are consistently ascribed to the **נָעַר**. MacDonald reports that in the historical books there are no

²⁷ John McDonald, “The Status and Role of the Na’ar in Israelite Society,” *JNES* 35.3 (1976) 147–70. This article has been summarized briefly also as “The ‘Naar’ in Israelite Society,” *Bible and Spade* (Winter 1977) 16–22. The results of this detailed and conclusive study have not yet been utilized for interpretive purposes.

²⁸ McDonald, “The Status and Role of the Na’ar in Israelite Society,” 147.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 150.

examples of a נָעַר of lowly birth.³⁰ Thus, whether the נָעַר is just an infant (like Moses [Exod 2:6], Samuel [1 Sam 1:22, 24–25], or Samson [Judg 13:5]) or an adolescent (like Jacob/Esau [Gen 25:27], Joseph [Gen 37:2], or Solomon [1 Kgs 3:7]), high status is the point—not merely age. Similarly, the feminine נָעָרָה also means a high-born young female, as can be seen by its usage in reference to Rebekah (Gen 24:16), Dinah (Gen 34:3), Pharaoh's daughter (Exod 2:5), and Queen Esther (Esth 2:4).

Personal Attendant

MacDonald also develops two realms in which the status of the נָעַר may be seen: (1) in the domestic realm; and (2) in military contexts.³¹ The נָעַר was frequently a special personal attendant of a person of status. Thus not only was Abraham's נָעַר called on to prepare the special meal for the three heavenly visitors (Gen 18:7–8), but later Abraham's trusted נָעָרים accompanied him to mount Moriah for the sacrificing of Isaac (Gen 22:3). Similarly, Joseph was a נָעַר over Potiphar's household and later came, as a נָעַר, into unique headship over Pharaoh's kingdom (Gen 41:12). Joshua, as the personal attendant of Moses, was called a נָעַר (Exod 33:11). When Saul was searching for his father's donkeys he was accompanied by, and listened to the advice of, his נָעַר (! Sam 9:22; cf. also 1 Kgs 11:20–28; 18:41–44; 19:3; Judg 17:7, 10; 1 Sam 2:17; Ruth 2:5, 21). The point of the above list is to demonstrate that the role of a נָעַר was a personal attendant of a person of status. MacDonald distinguishes between the upwardly mobile status of the נָעַר and the more menial עֲבָד (servant); the נָעַר could be put in charge over the עֲבָדים.

Military Cadet

It is significant how frequently the נָעַר is found in military contexts. He is one step above the regular troops, but not yet a mighty warrior such as Joab or Abner. When Joshua had to send out spies—hand-picked men to run reconnaissance on Jericho—he selected two skilled נָעָרים (Josh 6:22). Such an important mission would not have been left in the hands of novices. Gideon, the fearful “mighty man of valor” (Judg 6:12) is told to take his trusted נָעַר and go down to scout out the Midianite camp (Judg 7:10–11). Thus the seasoned warrior, Gideon, is accompanied by a squire, who, judging from the importance of the mission, is extremely skillful and trustworthy. Jonathan, climbing the cliffs of Wadi Suwenit, took a trusted נָעַר to face the formidable Philistine host. He and his armor-bearer

³⁰Ibid., 149.

³¹Ibid., 151, 156.

fought and slew 20 men (1 Sam 14:14). It should be clear that the armor-bearer was himself a warrior, though of inferior status to Jonathan. David, as he faced Goliath, was also designated as a נער—hence the impropriety of his fighting the Philistine champion from Gath (1 Sam 17:31ff.).

Several points may be derived from the above data. First, it is clear from the military contexts that inexperienced children are not meant. Rather the word designates soldiers with status above the regular troops, yet clearly and sharply distinguished from the heroic warriors like Goliath, Joab, and Abner. The status of the נער is also seen in his personal attendance on a person of status. The word is also used to describe sons of people of status. This usage is particularly important in Proverbs, which is addressed to the royal sons. Status, not age per se, was the focus of נער. While such clear societal structuring is somewhat foreign to the more egalitarian American culture, we dare not ignore it. Class distinctions were clearly marked not only in Israel, but also, as MacDonald and Rainey have shown, at Ugarit, where the only ancient cognate for the term נער is a term of status used for guild members serving in the domestic sphere and as superior military figures.³² Again, the focus is on status, not age. Thus when the Messianic king is called a נער, His status and function are being highlighted (Isa 7:14–16).

נער in Proverbs

How does understanding of the role of the נער in Israelite society affect Proverbs 22:6? Due to various archaeological finds of the last 100 years, it is possible to verify the presence of wisdom literature in all of the major cultures of the ancient Near East (Sumer, Mesopotamia, Ugarit, Egypt). In each of these cultures, wisdom literature was associated with, written for, and promulgated by the king³³ and his administrators—particularly the scribes.³⁴ The situation in Israel

³²Ibid., 150. A. F. Rainey, “The Military Personnel of Ugarit,” *JNES* 24 (1965) 17–27. Also vid. the Merneptah Inscription and a fourth century A.D. Samaritan Chronicle that clearly distinguishes between regular soldiers and the “na’ar” (McDonald, 152).

³³Some helpful treatments of this topic are: Malchow, “The Roots of Israel’s Wisdom in Sacral Kingship”; Leonidas Kalugila, *The Wise King*; Norman W. Porteous, “Royal Wisdom,” *VTSup* 3 (1969) 247–61; and Humphreys, “The Motif of the Wise Courtier in the Old Testament” (Ph.D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, 1970). Also vid. Humphrey’s article “The Motif of the Wise Courtier in the Book of Proverbs,” in *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978) 177–90.

³⁴A. Leo Oppenheim, “A Note on the Scribes in Mesopotamia,” *Assyriological Studies* 16 (1965) 253–56; and R. J. Williams, “Scribal Training in Ancient Egypt,” *JAOS* 92 (1972) 214–21; Benno Landsberger, “Scribal Concepts of Education,” in *City*

was the same, for king Solomon (1 Kgs 4:31–32; Prov 1:1; 10:1) and king Hezekiah (Prov 25:1) are explicitly associated with the Israelite wisdom tradition. In this royal setting, terms of status, such as נער, are to be expected. The proverbs helped prepare young squires for capable service at the head of the Israelite societal structure. Thus the suggestion that נער was a term of status, rather than merely of youthfulness, fits well with the original setting of proverbial wisdom literature not only in Israel, but also throughout the ancient Near East.

More to the point, however, is how the term נער is actually used in Proverbs and whether its usage there is consistent with how it is used in other literary genres. It is used seven times in Proverbs (1:4; 7:7; 20:11; 22:6, 15; 23:13; 29:15). Proverbs 1:4–5 announces that it is to the נער and to the simple, wise, and discerning that the book of Proverbs is addressed. Clearly in this context there is no hint that age is the key issue; rather, the נער and simple are grouped together (as are the wise and discerning) *according to their relationship to wisdom*. It is obvious from the message of Proverbs 1–9 (especially chs. 5 and 7) that the נער was not a child. The very content of the proverbial material (sexual advice [Prov 5:1–6, 15–21; 31:10–31]; economic counsel [10:5; 11:1]; political instruction [25:6–7; 29:12]; social graces [23:2]; and military advice [24:6]) indicates that the נער was a late adolescent or young adult. In Proverbs 1:4, the issue of the status is not in the foreground, but his need for wisdom. In Proverbs 7:7 the פָתָאִים (simple) and the נער are again paralleled, with the נער described as one lacking judgment. Proverbs 20:11 tells the נער that his behavior will be noticed and that it will reveal his heart. Proverbs 22:15 speaks of applying the rod of discipline to the נער to drive out folly. The point is that in spite of his naive bent for folly, he can be molded and instructed. Finally, Proverbs 29:15 says that a נער left to himself will disgrace his mother.

Before concluding this analysis of נער, it is worth noting that the נער in 22:6a is paralleled via grammatical transformation (noun/verb) with growing old. Although MacDonald argues that when the נער and זקן (elder) are paralleled they are both terms of societal status, his case is disrupted by his own examples (Ps 37:25 [cf. also Deut 28:50];

Invincible: A Symposium on Urbanization and Cultural Development in the Ancient Near East, ed. C. Kraeling and R. M. Adams (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1960) 123–27; A. F. Rainey “The Scribe at Ugarit,” *Israel Academy of Science and Humanities Proceedings* 3 (1969) 126–46; J. H. Johnson, “Avoid Hard Work, Taxes, and Bosses: Be a Scribe!” Paper, Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, n.d.; Åke W. Sjoberg, “In Praise of the Scribal Art,” *JCS* 14.2 (1972) 126–31; and Barry Halvorson, “Scribes and Scribal Schools in the Ancient Near East: A Historical Survey” (Th.M. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1981).

148:11–13; Jer 6:11). While status difference between the נער (squire) and the זקן (elder) may be the point in some cases, it seems that the age component is sometimes more prominent than he is wont to accept. Furthermore, because of the verbal nature of זקן in Proverbs 26:6b, the aging process, rather than rank, seems to be in view.

It should be clear that this verse should not be employed as biblical support for early childhood training, since the proverbial נער was surely an adolescent/young adult. He is a royal squire who is in the process of being apprenticed in wisdom for taking on royal responsibilities consistent with his status as a נער.

“ACCORDING TO HIS WAY”

The Moral View

The third semantic structure (על־פי דרכו) must be addressed before bringing the assessment of Proverbs 22:6a to a conclusion. There are four views that have been suggested for understanding the meaning of “his way” (דרכו). McKane holds what can be called the narrow “Moral View”.³⁵ He maintains that in wisdom there is one right way, the way of life, and it is to this way that the young man is directed. It is this way upon which he should go. The juxtaposing of קדך with a moral qualifier, whether positive—way of חייהם (life) [6:23]; בינה (understanding) [9:6]; טוב (good) [2:20]; צדקה (righteousness) [16:31]—or negative—way of רע (evil) [2:12]; רשעים (wicked) [4:19]—is quite common in Proverbs, as McKane observes. However, in these cases קדך is explicitly accompanied by a character qualifier. A qualifier is given in Proverbs 22:6, but it is not a moralistic one. A similar view, although broader in understanding, is the view held by many that קדך refers to the broad parental shaping of the child in the קדרה—meaning the general direction of righteousness, wisdom, and life—upon which that child should travel as he grows older.³⁶ Again the absence of moral or wisdom qualifiers (wise, righteous, upright, foolish, wicked, etc.) leaves this approach without decisive support.

The Vocational View

This view suggests that the training and the קדרה being described are vocationally oriented.³⁷ However, קדרה is not usually found in a vocational setting. Indeed the modern anxiety over vocational selec-

³⁵ McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach*, 564; cf. also Deane, et al., *Proverbs The Pulpit Commentary*, (Chicago: Wilcox and Follett, n.d.) 422; Collins, “A Hermeneutical and Exegetical Examination of Proverbs 22:6,” 30–32; and Alden, 160.

³⁶ Zockler, *The Proverbs of Solomon*, 192.

³⁷ Deane, et al., *Proverbs* 422; and Jones, *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*, 183f.

tion and training was not of great concern in the ancient Near East, in that the son often was trained in the same craft as the father.³⁸ Furthermore, vocational selection is not really an issue in Proverbs. Rather, diligence, righteousness, uprightness, and shrewdness are encouraged regardless of vocation.

The Personal Aptitude View

Many recent commentators have opted for the personal aptitude view.³⁹ Such an interpretation wisely advises that the parent must be keenly aware of the child's developing capacities, interests, and inclinations and must tailor the training process to enhance his unique abilities. Toy and Oesterley suggest that there is more of an element of fate or destiny. For them, the child should be trained according to the manner of life for which he is destined.⁴⁰ Delitzsch is correct in observing that "the way of the Egyptians" is the manner of acting which was characteristic of the Egyptians (Isa 10:24). The "way of the eagle" (Prov 30:19) is the manner of movement characteristic to the eagle. But the conclusion drawn from that data is incorrect because נער is read as "child". It is concluded that "his way" means the unique way for *that child*.⁴¹ A suggestion more consistent with the term נער will be offered below. Delitzsch is correct, however, in using נער to specify more clearly what is meant by בָּנָה.

The Personal Demands View

A small minority of writers have taken "according to his way" in an ironic sense. They suggest that the verse is saying that if you rear a child by acquiescing to his desires and demands, when he is old you will never break him of it. Thus the child, left to himself, will become irretrievably recalcitrant—spoiled, continually demanding his own way.⁴² But such a giving up on the נער is opposed to the optimistic outlook that Proverbs has on the teachability of the נער (Prov 1:4). To the ruggedly individualistic and developmentally sensitive modern mind,⁴³ the personal aptitude and personal demands views surely are

³⁸ Collins, "A Hermeneutical and Exegetical Examination of Proverbs 22:6," 31.

³⁹ Kidner, *Proverbs*, 147; Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 86; Oesterley, *The Book of Proverbs* (London: Methuen) 185; and Toy, *Proverbs*, 415–16. McKane also mentions Ringgren as holding this view (*Proverbs: A New Approach*, 564), as well as Perowne, (*The Proverbs*, 142). Much earlier it was held by the Jewish writer Saadia (Plaut, *Book of Proverbs*, 228).

⁴⁰ Oesterley, *The Book of Proverbs with Introduction and Notes*, 185; and Toy, *Proverbs*, 415–16.

⁴¹ Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 86f.

⁴² Ralbag as recorded in Greenstone, *Proverbs with Commentary*, 234.

⁴³ E. H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (NY: Norton, 1963) 247–77.

attractive. However, they do not reflect the ancient proverbial *weltanschauung*.

The Status View

Delitzsch is correct that the meaning of “the way” must be determined by the noun that is the antecedent of the 3ms suffix (his). If נער is understood as a high-born squire, then it may be suggested that “according to his way” means according to the office that he will occupy. He is to be “broken-in” (הנתק) as a נער. Thus, “his way” should be the way befitting the dignity of a נער. “His way” should also reflect an awareness of his developmental limitations and need for instruction. This solution fits the Proverbial ethos and is consistent with the above-stated view of who the נער was in the structure of Israelite society.

A Standard of Comparison

The initial part of the prepositional phrase, “according to his way,” should be read “according to the measure of his way”.⁴⁴ It is used quite frequently with reference to the measure or standard of the words of Pharaoh (Gen 45:21), Yahweh (Exod 17:1; Num 3:16, 39), Moses (Exod 38:21), and Pharaoh Necho (2 Kgs 23:35). In a more abstract sense, it is used when one is measured against a standard, whether it be words (Exod 34:27), what the vower is able to pay (Lev 27:8), or the Law (Dt 17:11). Thus it fits very well with initiating a נער in accordance with the standard of who he is and what he is to become as a נער.

CONCLUSION

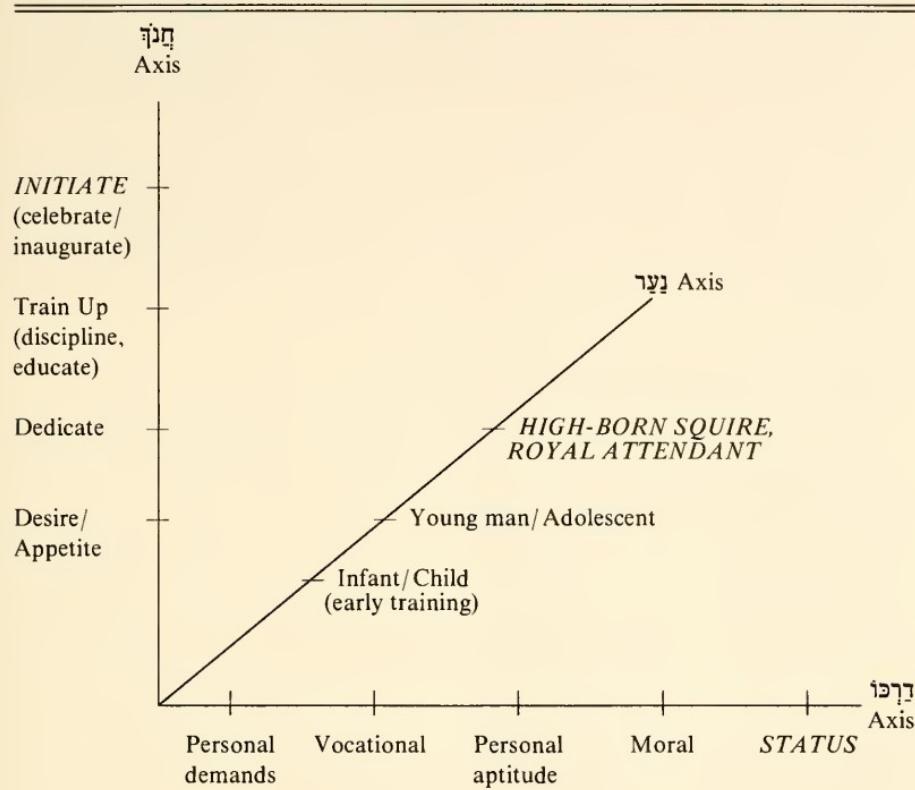
Options

A graph of the options presented in this paper provides a three-dimensional perspective on the choices. The more probable choices are given higher positions on the axes (see Table 1).

What was the original intent of the verse? Several negative features must set the stage. Proverbs 22:6 is not a promise; it is a proverb and as such it does not describe truth comprehensively. Rather, it gives a single component of truth that must be fit together with other elements of truth in order to approximate the more comprehensive, confused patterns of real life. Second, this verse should not be seen as a paradigm for a comprehensive parental or educa-

⁴⁴BDB, 805; and Collins “A Hermeneutical and Exegetical Examination of Proverbs 22:6,” 33f.

TABLE I
Proverbs 22:6a
 (In order of increasing possibilities)



tional process of instruction into which a particular theory of instruction or child rearing may be read. Third, this verse should not be employed as direct biblical support for early childhood training since the proverbial נער was not an infant. Fourth, the phrase “according to his way” should not be understood as addressing developmental or personal aptitude issues, although obviously in child-rearing such parental sensitivities are crucial.

Suggested Interpretation

It is apparent that the usual translation of "child" for נער is inadequate. The primary focus of נער was his high-born status as a squire. In Proverbs the נער is a late adolescent/young adult. Furthermore, the word usually translated "train up" (תנעה) was shown to be used almost universally with the dedication/initiation of temples, houses, altars, or walls. Thus to תנעה a young squire would be to recognize his status as a נער and initiate him into his official

capacities/responsibilities with the respect and excitement fitting his status. “According to his way” meant according to the standard and status of what would be demanded of the נער in that culture. Thus the squire’s status is to be recognized and his experience, training, and subsequent responsibilities are to reflect that high stature. Finally, this interpretation fits well in the context (Prov 22:1–9) which talks about societal relationships and responsibilities, particularly of the wealthy.⁴⁵

What are the advantages of this interpretation? First, it makes sense of several difficult lexical problems that have formerly been ignored. Second, it fits the ethos of the Proverbial and wisdom materials. Third, it fits the words חנוך, נער, and דָּרְךָ into a coherent whole.

Dynamic Modern Potentialities

Does the above interpretation of original intent destroy all modern application? The child-rearing interpretation has been so convenient and potent in addressing a major concern of many parents. Can this verse, with this proposed interpretation, provide for our world the dynamic interpersonal power that it must have originally evoked? First, the נער was the one being initiated and being given the recognition of the status which his title bestowed on him. Does this not teach that in initiating an adolescent into a position, the young person should be given the respect and dignity due the title under which he is being trained? If given that type of recognition, he will willingly continue his services when he gets older because he has gained in that position the dignity, respect and responsibility which provide him a healthy level of satisfaction.

This idea of initiating someone with an appropriate level of dignity, respect and responsibility also fits well in a familial setting. The late adolescent (נער) should be treated with dignity and respect in view of creation (Gen 2) and redemption (Rev 20, etc.). Thus he should be given experience, training, status, and responsibilities correspondent to his role in the kingdom of God. An adolescent should be initiated into the adult world with celebrations. His status as a redeemed image bearer should demand parental involvement in terms of opening horizons, patient instruction, and loving discipline. It is his dominion, destiny and status that the parent must keep in mind. The parent must not violate the adolescent’s personhood by authoritarian domination, permissive allowance of immaturity, or overprotection from the consequences of his actions.

⁴⁵Roland Murphy cogently shows how Prov 22:1–9 centers around the theme of riches. “Proverbs 22:1–9,” *Int* 41:4 (1987) 398–402.

This verse also teaches that when someone engages in an activity for the first time, a celebration of the event would encourage him in the correct path (e.g., Jewish Bar-Mitzvah celebrations). Thus, a word or deed of encouragement (recognition and celebration) that bestows respect and responsibility commensurate with status is one of the most powerful aspects of parental involvement in the life of an adolescent. It is also effective for employer/employee relationships.⁴⁶

These initial attempts at dynamically understanding this verse in light of modern relational structures suggest that a reinterpretation of a verse in its original setting need not eliminate dynamic applications. Both careful interpretation and application are critical if God's word is to be unleashed in a world that is in desperate need of a word of wisdom from the Sovereign of the Universe.

⁴⁶Rudolf Dreikurs, *Children: The Challenge* (New York: Hawthorn/Dutton, 1964), 36-56. Larry Crabb and Dan Allender, *Encouragement: The Key to Caring* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984).

THE VALIDITY OF HUMAN LANGUAGE: A VEHICLE FOR DIVINE TRUTH

JACK BARENTSEN

Doubts have arisen about the adequacy of human language to convey inerrant truth from God to man. These doubts are rooted in an empirical epistemology, as elaborated by Hume, Kant, Heidegger and others. Many theologians adopted such an empirical view and found themselves unable to defend a biblical view of divine, inerrant revelation. Barth was slightly more successful, but in the end he failed. The problem is the empirical epistemology that first analyzes man's relationship with creation. Biblically, the starting point should be an analysis of man's relationship with his Creator. When approached this way, creation (especially the creation of man in God's image) and the incarnation show that God and man possess an adequate, shared communication system that enables God to communicate intelligibly and inerrantly with man. Furthermore, the Bible's insistence on written revelation shows that inerrant divine communication carries the same authority whether written or spoken.

* * *

As a result of the materialistic, empirical scepticism of the last two centuries, many theologians entertain doubts about the adequacy of human language to convey divine truth (or, in some cases, to convey truth of any kind). This review of the philosophical and theological origins of the current doubts about language lays a foundation for a biblical view of language.

THE CONTEMPORARY PROBLEM

One recent writer stated the problem of the adequacy of religious language in these words:

The problem of religious knowledge, in the context of contemporary philosophical analysis, is basically this: no one has any. The problem of

religious language, in the same context, is this: can we find an excuse for uttering these sentences we apparently have no business saying?¹

The writer highlights two important aspects of the debate on the adequacy of language. First, the problems of religious knowledge and language arise primarily in the context of contemporary philosophical analysis. Second, the problem of religious language is inherent in the current sceptical view of religious knowledge: if we have no knowledge of transcendent realities, how could we speak about them in any meaningful way?² What philosophical currents have led to such a bleak view of the possibility of religious knowledge and language?

PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

Hume's Empiricism

David Hume (1711–1776) believed that all knowledge is derived from our sensations, referring to vision, hearing, feeling, smelling, and tasting. Experience alone is the key to understanding one's environment. Hume elevated experience as the measure of truth and held that ideas or thoughts could be valid only if they have their roots in experience.

This premise has important implications for our understanding of intangible concepts such as cause and effect, theistic arguments, or ethics. For instance, no one has ever *seen* a cause or an effect. All we have seen is a succession of events that has been repeated several times so that *in our minds* we come to connect them as cause and effect. Since nobody can observe cause or effect in a literal sense, it is impossible to *know* whether such concepts are true. One may only suggest or speculate that such concepts are true about his experience.

Knowledge is thus strictly limited to experience. It does not include speculation about experience. Concepts like cause and effect are thereby relegated to the realm of speculation rather than to the realm of knowledge.

Hume applies the same argument to Christianity, theistic proofs, ethics (especially when dealing with absolute standards), and other related concepts:

If we take in our hand any volume—of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance—let us ask *Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number?* No. *Does it contain any experimental*

¹D. R. Broiles, "Linguistic Analysis of Religious Language," *Religious Language and Knowledge* (ed. R. H. Ayers and W. T. Blackstone; Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1981) 135.

²Cf. L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), 6:45, 6:522, 6:44, 6:432.

reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing except sophistry and illusion.³

This position is called “empirical scepticism”: any concept that does not immediately rest on experience cannot be the subject of our knowledge. Hume would not actually deny such intangible concepts. Cause and effect are helpful categories in discussing our experience, but the closest we come to *knowledge* is to assert that such categories are probable.⁴ And while the concept of probability can be helpful, it cannot be described as settled knowledge. Though it may be helpful to digest the weatherman’s nightly predictions, one grants them little status above that of informed speculation.

Kant’s Metaphysical Dualism

The problem with Hume’s philosophy is that knowledge is not just limited; it is, in fact, impossible. How could knowledge arise from sensations? Our perception of a chair is no more than various impressions like the color brown, a particular shape, and a hard or soft feeling. These impressions are combined into the image of a chair. But what makes us select only those sensations that pertain to our perception of the chair rather than one of the dozens of other impressions we are receiving, such as the room being stuffy, the smell of food, the phone ringing, etc.? It would seem that the mind has an important part in arranging all these sensations so that our world becomes intelligible. “Knowledge presupposes the recognition and comparison of causal, spatial and temporal relations, and much more. None of this, however, is provided by the senses. They give only tastes, odors, color patches and so on.”⁵

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) attempted to resolve this difficulty by appealing both to the human intellect and our experiences. His basic conclusion was that the mind had certain innate categories, such as space and time, by which the sensory data could be organized and arranged, and which thus made knowledge possible.⁶

This theory does not escape all of the difficulties of Hume’s empiricism. Concepts like causality and necessity are now part of the mind’s makeup and help us to explain our world. But Kant’s categories of the mind only help to organize and arrange the sensory data; they are of no help in thinking about the metaphysical world.

³D. Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962), sec. 12, pt. 3, quoted in G. R. Habermas, “Skepticism: Hume,” *Biblical Errancy: An Analysis of its Philosophical Roots* (ed. N. L. Geisler; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981) 32.

⁴Habermas, “Skepticism: Hume,” 32.

⁵D. W. Beck, “Agnosticism: Kant,” in Geisler, *Biblical Errancy*, 57.

⁶Ibid., 59.

Consequently, a concept of God is beyond our sensations and experiences as well as beyond our mind's makeup. Even though knowledge of experience is now possible, we are still unable to have knowledge of metaphysical realities.

Kant, however, pursued the issue further. Being a religious man, he wished to establish a rational place for God in his system. For ethics, this insistence on rationality meant that any acceptable absolute standards had to be derived from the following maxim: "Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should be a universal law"; that is, you should do as you want everyone else to do. This is called the "categorical imperative." From this kind of reasoning, Kant envisaged that one could arrive at all other great metaphysical ideas, like freedom, God, and immortality.⁷ These concepts, though, cannot be known; they are speculations in considering the practical way of life.⁸

For Kant, then, reason was sufficient to discover all the vital truths that orthodox Christianity derived from revelation. Revelation became superfluous. Kant's insistence upon the rationality of ethics and religion left no place for divine revelation. Even so, reason could only speculate about metaphysical realities, but it could not attain absolute knowledge in this area.

Kant's philosophy, like Hume's, has no room for religious knowledge beyond that of speculation. But Kant, unlike Hume, found a place for religion in his system through his categorical imperative. His religion is not a revealed religion, but an ethical one.⁹

THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Nineteenth Century Liberalism

Many nineteenth century theologians, following Hume's sceptical views, rejected the supernatural. God, Christ, angels and many other concepts of the supernatural are not immediately subject to our senses of hearing, vision, touch, taste or smell. Therefore, so these theologians reasoned, we cannot really *know* anything about the supernatural; all we have is speculation. These men came to see the world as a closed continuum without any supernatural beings or events.

Naturally, the idea followed that we have no divine revelation. In a closed continuum God could not have intervened to create any

⁷Ibid., 61.

⁸Cf. C. van Til, *The Protestant Doctrine of Scripture* (N.p.: den Bulk Christian Foundation, 1967) 54.

⁹In biblical exegesis a corresponding shift has been noticed, "from Luther's explicit christocentrism to ethicocentrism" (Beck, "Agnosticism: Kant," 67).

written, revealed record. "In a closed system . . . any idea of revelation becomes nonsense."¹⁰ The emphasis shifted accordingly from God's Word to human witness. The Bible became only a record of man's experiences of the divine; and rather than revealing God, the Bible dealt with man's reactions to what he perceived to be divine. Although man's experience with the divine is important, it is inadequate to serve as the basis of a theistic worldview.

The next logical step was to forsake the Bible altogether. However, theologians generally avoided this radical step by rejecting as authoritative any human influences in the Bible while holding on to what traces of divine influence they could find. The Historical-Critical school represents this movement. The focus of exegesis became God's activity in history rather than his word about these activities. Doctrine was inferred from the historical record rather than being derived from God's statements about that record. Although God was not conceived of as intervening directly in history (as witnessed by the denial of miracles¹¹) he apparently could still have some effect.¹²

Barth's Neo-Orthodoxy

It seems that one of Karl Barth's main concerns has been to recover a biblical concept of God. In order to do so, he returned to some concept of revelation, although it was not in agreement with the biblical concept. He also recovered a sense of God, in that God was supposed to speak *through* the Bible.

Yet, his effort was crippled from the beginning, because he founded his theology on the Kantian and Humean premise that knowledge is derived from experience.

We cannot conceive God because we cannot even contemplate him. He cannot be the object of one of those perceptions to which our concepts, our thought forms and finally our words and sentences are related.¹³

Furthermore, under the ban of Kantian metaphysical dualism, he stated: "God cannot be compared to anyone or anything. He is only like himself."¹⁴ That is, God is wholly Other, totally different from

¹⁰F. A. Schaeffer, *He Is There And He Is Not Silent* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1972) 63.

¹¹Habermas, "Skepticism: Hume," 31.

¹²S. Obitts, "The Meaning and Use of Religious Language," *Tensions of Contemporary Theology* (ed. S. N. Gundry and A. F. Johnson; Chicago: Moody, 1976) 107.

¹³K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (London: T. & T. Clark, 1936ff.) II, 1:186 (140). All references to Barth's *Church Dogmatics* as given are cited in G. H. Clark, *Karl Barth's Theological Method* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1963). The number in parentheses refers to this work.

¹⁴Ibid., II, 1:376 (146).

ourselves. He is completely removed from the sphere of sensory experience. Consequently, man cannot attain to a true knowledge of God.¹⁵

Barth's view of language proceeds from this emphasis on experience. Language, he argues, as sinful and perverted man uses it, is limited to this world.¹⁶ Any attempt and intention to speak of God is impossible, because "God does not belong to the world. Therefore he does not belong to the series of objects for which we have categories and words."¹⁷ And, of course, without concepts and words, we cannot speak of God.

Despite his heavy emphasis on the limitations of language, Barth makes a desperate attempt to allow language to speak of God. Theological language, "whatever the cost, must always speak and believe that it can speak contrary to the natural capacity of this language, as theological language of God's revelation."¹⁸ How can language on the one hand be so limited that it *cannot* possibly speak of God, while on the other hand the theologian must believe that, "whatever the cost," this language *can* speak of God? The answer seems to lie in a mystical view of language. In its normal use, language refers to the objects of our experience; but in its theological use, it points to some greater reality beyond itself. A dogma seems to refer to an inner meaning that is not itself a proposition, although this inner meaning is referred to by a proposition. Barth most emphatically refuses to identify the inner meaning of a dogma with the plain meaning of the proposition, which is considered merely an impersonal, objective truth-in-itself.¹⁹ The Bible no longer contains propositional truth, but rather becomes the vehicle through which "the prophets and apostles and he of whom they testify rise up and meet the Church in a living way."²⁰

Barth's attempt to move toward a more biblical religion than what liberal theology offered was noble. However, by granting some of the premises of liberalism, he compromised his position from the very beginning. What we have left is not a biblical religion of

¹⁵ On this basis Barth later denied that man was created in the image of God (G. H. Clark, "The Image of God in Man," *JETS* 12 [Fall, 1969] 221).

¹⁶ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I, 1:390 (119).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 2:750 (117).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 1:390 (120).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 1:313 (135). See also Clark's comments on Barth, *Karl Barth's Theological Method*, 129.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 2:582. See also J. W. Montgomery, "Inspiration and Inerrancy: A New Departure," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 8:2 (1965) 63–66. Note the similarity to Kierkegaard's rejection of objective divine truth in favor of subjectivity, discussed by N. L. Geisler, "Philosophical Presuppositions of Biblical Errancy," in *Inerrancy* (ed. N. L. Geisler; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979) 327.

revelation, but a system of religious beliefs that contrasts to an extreme degree man's finitude and God's transcendence. As a consequence, man cannot really know God in the traditional sense, so Barth takes recourse to existentialism; rather than choosing for revealed religion, he chooses the path of irrationalism.²¹

Some Twentieth Century Developments

Barth's idea of revelation is closely related to Kierkegaard's idea of truth as subjectivity instead of objective knowledge.²² It is the idea that there can be "no absolute expression of truth in propositional form."²³ In contemporary theology this idea takes various forms. Some would hold that revelation is not incompatible with propositional truth but that the most important aspect of revelation is "God giving himself to us in Jesus Christ."²⁴ But for most writers the choice is between the person of God and propositions about him.²⁵ Yet others, repulsed by the idea that our speech makes God into an object, hold that any speech about God is illegitimate.²⁶

The separation of the subjective understanding of truth from the objective reality to be understood gives rise to a similar dichotomy between God's words and his acts. God's words, we are told, do not convey information either about the world or about himself, primarily because supernatural words cannot occur in an experiential type of knowledge.²⁷ The attractive suggestion is made that the Bible is "not propositional and static, but dynamic and active; its focus is on acts, not assertions."²⁸ While there is an element of truth here (that the Bible is dynamic, cf. Heb 4:12), it would be wrong to

²¹"It is not surprising that Dr. Karl Barth's slogan *Finitum non capax infiniti* [the finite cannot comprehend the infinite] went together with a denial . . . of any rational understanding of revelation" (E. Mascall, *Words and Images: A Study in Theological Discourse* [New York: Ronald Press, 1954] 104, quoted in G. H. Clark, *Language and Theology* [Phillipsburg: NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980] 95).

²²G. H. Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1961) 76.

²³See Montgomery, "Inspiration and Inerrancy," 53.

²⁴J. H. Gill, "Talk About Religious Talk," *New Theology* No. 4 (ed. M. E. Marty and D. G. Peerman; New York: Macmillan, 1967) 103.

²⁵See Geisler, "Philosophical Presuppositions of Biblical Errancy," 330.

²⁶H. Ott, "Language and Understanding," in Marty and Peerman, *New Theology* No. 4, 142. Yet another form of the objection is that language cannot express absolute truth, because it is "conditioned by its historical development and usage" (see Montgomery, "Inspiration and Inerrancy," 53; see our discussion later in this article).

²⁷See C. F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority* (6 vols.; Waco, TX: Word, 1976–1982), 3:248.

²⁸See Montgomery's analysis in "Inspiration and Inerrancy," 52. Pinnock shows the influence of this thinking when he states, "At the core of the biblical conception is revelation as divine activity" (*Biblical Revelation* [Chicago: Moody, 1971] 31).

minimize God's statements while exclusively emphasizing his acts in history.²⁹

Bultmann and Brunner have further developed Barth's mystical view of theological language. Language about God is not merely propositional truth but is instead symbolic of the greater reality to which it refers.³⁰ Their program of demythologizing biblical language would presumably bring one closer to God.³¹

Heidegger's Irrational Mysticism

Heidegger takes the concept of knowledge based on experience to its logical extreme. For him, any kind of language is mystical, not just theological language. Kant had argued that knowledge of reality was only possible through the categories of the mind. Since we cannot know things apart from these categories, Heidegger maintains that we cannot know things as they are "in-themselves." So no true knowledge of reality as it is "in-itself" is possible.

The result of Heidegger's philosophy is that not only are metaphysical realities beyond the scope of our knowledge, but so are physical realities. Earlier, divine realities constituted the ineffable reality that is encountered rather than heard or understood, but now *everything* we see and experience is really ineffable. To put it in more Heideggerian terms,

language becomes mystical message from the ineffable voice of Being.
The unsayable cannot be said, only felt.³²

Or, according to Van Til's interpretation, "there is a kernel of thingness in every concrete fact that utterly escapes all possibility of expression."³³ Thus, all of language, not merely theological language, is reduced to a function other than conveying cognitive knowledge.

At least two important corollaries of this philosophy should be mentioned. First, as we hinted, knowledge is no longer the organization of empirical data into true propositions. This would only amount to "substituting a small segment of verbalization for experiential

²⁹R. K. Curtis, "Language and Theology: Some Basic Considerations," *GordRev* 1:3 (1955) 102.

³⁰See N. L. Geisler, *Philosophy of Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974) 230.

³¹A. Dulles, "Symbol, Myth, and the Biblical Revelation," in Marty and Peerman, *New Theology* No. 4, 41.

³²See H. M. Ducharme, Jr., "Mysticism: Heidegger," in Geisler, *Biblical Errancy*, 223.

³³C. van Til, "Introduction," in B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1948) 19.

knowledge.”³⁴ So, while propositional knowledge may be public since many people can agree with it, the new concept of experiential knowledge is private since each person’s experiences differ, if ever so slightly, from the experiences of others. “No two people see anything alike in every respect.”³⁵

A second corollary of this thoroughgoing relativity in language is that the study of a text no longer needs to be a consideration of the intentions of the author as expressed in the affirmations of the text; rather the text is one object among many in our environment. The text now becomes autonomous and its meaning depends on the needs of human existence at any particular time.³⁶ A multiplicity of meanings results which cannot be checked except by the existential truth each meaning carries for a particular person.³⁷

EVALUATION

Following empirical philosophies, theologians have often considered truth more and more as a subjective event. This has dangerous consequences. If propositions merely point to some greater reality which itself cannot be expressed in propositions, then how can we know anything about that reality? If we can have a genuine experience of that reality, it would seem that we could assert at least a few objective truths about it in propositional form.

A more serious problem is this: since experience cannot be expressed in propositions, how can we know whether it is true or false? This seems impossible to determine.³⁸ We seem to have no means by which to distinguish an experience with a greater, evil reality from a similar experience with a good reality. Clearly, the theory that knowledge is based on experience is not a very satisfactory solution to the philosophical problem of knowledge.

With regard to theological language, the proposed choice between the person of God and propositions about him is a false dilemma. It is not a question of either/or but rather of both/and. Revelation is God revealing himself—sometimes in propositional

³⁴Curtis, “Language and Theology,” 99.

³⁵Ibid., 100.

³⁶Ducharme, “Mysticism: Heidegger,” 212. Note the similarity with the distinction sometimes made between devotional Bible reading and biblical exegesis.

³⁷At this point a brief analysis of Ayer’s *Language, Truth and Logic* and some of Wittgenstein’s writings could be helpful, but it exceeds the scope of this article. Suffice it to mention that the basic problem remains the same, an epistemology that wants to derive all knowledge from experience alone.

³⁸Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation*, 86.

truth, sometimes in personal acts (e.g., Isa 6:1–8)—but always for the purpose of our trusting the person of God.

The disjunction between faith in a person and belief in a creed is a delusion. . . . Trust in a person is a knowledge of a person; it is a matter of assenting to certain propositions.³⁹

As long as propositions take us beyond dry creedal conformity into a relationship with a living person, there is no real person/proposition disunity.

One may well conclude, then, that the attempt to explain theological language in terms of empirical knowledge theory is an utter failure. Without reference to the biblical concept of divine revelation, theological language will either crash on the rocks of rationalism or evaporate in the mysteries of irrationalism.

TOWARD A BIBLICAL PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE: PRESUPPOSITIONAL APPROACH

The failure of modern philosophy to defend even the possibility of theological language reinforces an important principle: that “Christianity is based on revelation, not experience.”⁴⁰ Therefore, instead of refuting sceptics on their own grounds or building a philosophy of language on their philosophical premises (as theologians have tried and failed), biblical data will be used to paint a biblical picture of religious language.

It may be objected that such a presuppositional approach involves circular reasoning.⁴¹ But the choice is not between one approach that is circular in its reasoning and another that is not. It should be evident from this review of modern philosophy that once one assumes knowledge to be exclusively experiential, he will not be able to defend propositional revelation. This in turn implies that knowledge is only experiential—which is circular reasoning. The choice is, rather, between sets of presuppositions.

EXPLORING BIBLICAL DATA

The Bible never directly addresses the question of whether God can meaningfully speak to man. It is assumed as self-evident that God

³⁹Ibid., 102. Notice also that the Bible rules out the concept of existential or subjective truth, because it frequently refers to “hearing” or “understanding,” terms which would be irrelevant on the modern view, according to W. J. Martin, “Special Revelation as Objective,” in C. F. H. Henry, *Revelation and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958) 66.

⁴⁰Clark, *Language and Theology*, 141.

⁴¹M. E. Taber, “Fundamentalist Logic,” *The Christian Century*, July 3, 1957; 817.

can intelligibly communicate with the human beings he created. Likewise it is assumed that man can understand and interact with the God who made him.⁴² As these assumptions are uncovered exegetically, we will address the issues often discussed under the heading of “philosophy of language.”

The Starting Point of a Biblical Philosophy of Language

As has been suggested, one of the Bible’s assumptions is that God can speak to man because he created him. In other words, God must have endowed man with adequate faculties to respond to and interact with his Creator. One of the most prominent features of the creation of mankind is that God created them “in his own image” (Gen 1:27). This text (and related ones) brings out some important guidelines for a doctrine of the image of God in man without directly defining it.

Gen 1:26, “Let us make man in our *image*, according to our *likeness*,” uses the two terms צָלָם and דְמֹות. It appears that both refer to a visible image or at least something that can be visualized, while דְמֹות is the more abstract of the two.⁴³ The Hebrew construction is most likely a hendiadys and would therefore function as a form of parallelism,⁴⁴ so it is best to take the latter term as intensifying the former. Thus, we should not distinguish rigidly between the two terms.⁴⁵ The resultant meaning is that “man, the end point, can be recognized as being an adequate copy of the God who made him, the starting point.”⁴⁶

It would be hard to make much of the different prepositions used, - בְ and - בִ. While the clause in Gen 1:26 reads בְצַלְמָנוּ כְדָמוֹתֵנוּ, it reads בְדָמוֹתוֹ כְצַלְמָוֹן in Gen 5:3; the prepositions remain in place, but the nouns have changed positions. The difference in the use of these

⁴²See J. I. Packer, “The Adequacy of Human Language,” in Geisler, *Inerrancy*, 208–11 for a brief analysis of the kind of language the Bible uses. He shows that biblical language is a normal language, no different from daily speech except in the topics it deals with.

⁴³T. Craigen, “Selem and D^emut: An Exegetical Interaction” (unpublished term paper, Grace Theological Seminary, 1980) 5, 11.

⁴⁴P. F. Taylor, “Man: His Image and Dominion” (unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1974) 62–63.

⁴⁵L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (8 vols.; Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), 2:161; C. L. Feinberg, “The Image of God,” *BSac* 129 (June–August 1972) 237; C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, vol. 1 (trans. J. Martin, in *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971); H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1942); and Taylor, “Man: His Image and Dominion,” 71.

⁴⁶Craigen, “Selem and D^emut: An Exegetical Interaction,” 24.

prepositions is negligible.⁴⁷ Both of these prepositions can mean “after,” but it would be clumsy to interpret this as if man is the copy of an image of God, “after our image and likeness.” Rather we should take this to mean that man himself constitutes the image of God.⁴⁸

Furthermore, Gen 1:26 mentions the image of God in man and man’s dominion in one single breath. This should not, however, lead us to conclude that dominion is part of this image:

Man must exist before dominion can be invested in him and . . . man has authority because of the truth that he is made in the image or likeness of God. The authority is not the cause of the image or likeness, but the image or likeness is the ground of authority.⁴⁹

The next two verses (vv 27–28) identify the image as part of man’s essential makeup, whereas dominion is an office conferred upon him; the image is created, the dominion is commanded. The image is the foundation of man’s dominion.⁵⁰

Thus, according to Gen 1:26–28, man himself is the image of God in the sense that God is the pattern after which man was made; God is the archetype and man the ectype. As a result man has been granted dominion over the earth.

In light of this, it would be erroneous to follow the common procedure of determining the content of the image of God by discerning what characteristics differentiate man from animals. If God is the archetype, then a more biblical approach is to examine the divine image in relation to God, not in relation to the rest of creation.⁵¹

Accordingly, a biblical philosophy of language (as well as a biblical epistemology) should begin by analyzing the Creator–creature relationship and only secondarily the relationships between creatures and with the rest of creation.⁵² This is strikingly different from the philosophies of Hume and Kant which began by analyzing man’s relationship with created things and sought to explain any relationship with the supernatural in terms of the observable relationships between man and things.

⁴⁷Ibid., 19. Cf. also L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941) 204; J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis* (trans. and ed. J. King, reprint ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979); Keil and Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*; and Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*.

⁴⁸Taylor, “Man: His Image and Dominion,” 71–72.

⁴⁹Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 2:162.

⁵⁰Feinberg, “The Image of God,” 239; Keil and Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*; J. Piper, “The Image of God,” *Studia Biblica et Theologica* 1 (March 1971) 20.

⁵¹Cf. D. Cairns, *The Image of God in Man* (London: Collins, 1973) 118.

⁵²Even then man’s relationship with his fellows is more important than his relationship with the rest of creation (cf. Gen 2:18).

It may be objected that, in a fallen world, God no longer serves as an archetype to whom man is reliably comparable. The human capacity for a relationship with God has been crippled by the effects of the fall. Sin obviously hinders our relationship with God. So how could we base a philosophy of language on this doctrine of the image of God and analyze a Creator-creature relationship marred by sin?

This admittedly is a difficult task. But the continuing importance of the doctrine in several areas of human conduct must not be overlooked.

The first human birth in history is recorded with the words, "Adam . . . had a son in his own likeness, in his own image" (Gen 5:3). The terminology used in this verse is almost equivalent to Gen 1:26 (which may have been what Luke had in mind when he wrote, "Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God," Luke 3:38). This passage establishes the fact that the pattern for the creation of man is perpetuated in human procreation.⁵³ Many expositors hold that this passage teaches that fallen human nature is transmitted from one generation to the next.⁵⁴ Although one may agree with this statement in the light of further revelation (e.g., Romans 5), the passage itself does not address this issue. The repetition of the terminology of Gen 1:26 in 5:3 refers the first human birth back to the creation process and shows that the image of God in Adam is recreated in Seth through human procreation.

A second passage in Genesis is more problematic:

- (1) Whoever sheds the blood of man,
- (2) by man shall his blood be shed;
- (3) for in the image of God has God made man (Gen 9:6).

The first and most debated question is whether phrase (2) refers to the institution of human government or to a designated avenger of blood. The context, however, does not decide this issue, so "the argument . . . is based on silence."⁵⁵

A second question, often overlooked, is whether phrase (3) refers to phrase (1) or (2) or both. If it is taken as referring to the second phrase, then the conclusion would be that man has the right to punish murder, because man as the one who punishes is made in God's image and is therefore clothed "with the judicial function appertaining to kingly office."⁵⁶ It is unlikely, however, that the image of God

⁵³ Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 2:167.

⁵⁴ Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses*; Keil and Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*; Harold G. Stigers, *A Commentary on Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976).

⁵⁵ J. J. Davis, *Paradise to Prison: Studies in Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975).

⁵⁶ M. G. Kline, "Creation in the Image of the Glory-Spirit," *WTJ* 39 (Spring 1977) 265.

is the foundation of man as judge. The *imago dei* is usually mentioned in contexts that are concerned with personal ethics and not with judgment *per se*.

In verse 5b God demands an accounting from each man “for the life of his fellow man.” The manner of this accounting is indicated in verse 6, phrases (1) and (2), while the reason for God’s demand is given in verse 6, phrase (3). Thus, God’s demand for an account of human life is based on the divine image in man: murder destroys this image.⁵⁷

Capital punishment is not, in essence, retaliation for life destroyed or harm done; it is the punishment for one who blasphemes God by destroying what God expressly made in his image. Man’s possession of the image of God continues to have profound moral implications even in a fallen world.

Similar moral implications are evident in Jas 3:9. Hiebert points out that the perfect tense used in “men, who have been made in God’s likeness” indicates a present result of a past event.⁵⁸ “The connection is simply that one cannot pretend to bless the person (God) and logically curse the representation of that person (a human).”⁵⁹

1 Cor 11:7 is somewhat more difficult. Paul identifies the man as “the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man.” It is not immediately clear why only the man is identified as the image of God. Paul has been explaining that Christ is the head of every man who, in turn, is the head of the woman (v 3). In vv 8–9 he refers back to Gen 2:21–24 and “uses the mode of Creation to prove simply that God intended men and women to be different.”⁶⁰ The difference is not whether both men and women are created in God’s image (the text is silent about women in this respect), but rather whose glory men and women are.

In our context, it is best to take δόξα in the objective sense of that which “honors and magnifies” God.⁶¹ Thus, the passage teaches that “a man, who is the image of God, reveals how beautiful a being

⁵⁷ Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses*; Keil and Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*; Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*.

⁵⁸ D. E. Hiebert, *The Epistle of James: Tests of a Living Faith* (Chicago: Moody, 1979).

⁵⁹ P. H. Davids, *The Epistle of James, A Commentary on the Greek Text*, in *New International Greek Text Commentary* (ed. I. H. Marshall and W. W. Gasque; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982); Hiebert, *The Epistle of James*.

⁶⁰ J. Murphy-O’Connor, “Sex and Logic in 1 Cor 11:2–16,” *CBQ* 42 (1980) 496.

⁶¹ F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, in *New International Commentary on the New Testament* (ed. F. F. Bruce; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953). See also A. Feuillet, “L’Homme ‘Gloire de Dieu’ et la Femme ‘Gloire de l’Homme,’” *Rev Bib* 81 (1974) 172, and F. Godet, *Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, vol. 2 (trans. A. Cusin; Grand Rapids: Zondervan,

God could create, which makes him the crown of creation, the glory of God. A woman, on the other hand, reveals how beautiful a being God could create from a man.”⁶²

Paul highlights a man’s relationship to God by mentioning not only glory but also the image. But when he discusses a woman’s relationship to a man, he cannot simply repeat that “she is the image and glory of man” because a woman is not made in the image of man. Yet he does not want to say that “a woman is the image of God and the glory of man,” because he is singling out a woman’s relationship to a man. Thus Paul drops the concept of image and only states that “the woman is the glory of man.” He leaves understood that a woman is in the image of God, while he points out man’s close relationship to God by expressly referring to the image.

Clearly, the doctrine of the image of God is far from irrelevant in a fallen world. It adds significantly to our understanding of human procreation (Gen 5:3), capital punishment (Gen 9:6), human relationships (Jas 3:9) and orderly conduct in the church (1 Cor 11:7). These observations certainly allow the doctrine to play a significant role in a biblical philosophy of language.

Human Language Legitimately Refers to the Supernatural

Inquiring into the doctrine of the image of God points to the primacy of the Creator-creature relationship. Therefore, man’s existence in the image of God is first of all to be seen in light of God’s presence. Man’s existence takes on a moral dimension and is first of all a theological fact, only secondarily an existential reality. The fact that man *exists* is secondary to the fact that God has *created* him.

The Genesis account itself supports this concept. God on several occasions pronounced his creation good. On the sixth day, after creating man in the image of himself, he pronounced it “very good” (Gen 1:31). This establishes a “profound moral significance to man’s

1957). R. C. H. Lenski (*The Interpretation of Paul’s First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1937]) interprets δόξα as “reflection” but this has little support from other sources (see Feuillet, 163). Others have taken the term as indicating “supremacy” (J. Moffat, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, in *The Moffat New Testament Commentary* [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938]), but this is also unlikely, since the term either carries a subjective meaning, such as “opinion, belief, conjecture,” or refers to the objective reality of “reputation, glory, honor” (Feuillet, 163). In addition, the Hebrew word כָּבוֹד corresponds to the Greek δόξα, which also indicates a meaning other than reflection or supremacy (*Ibid.*, 164).

⁶²Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*. Cf. D. R. DeLacey, “Image and Incarnation in Pauline Christology—A Search for Origins,” *TynBul* 30 (1979) 18–19, and Feuillet, “L’Homme ‘Gloire de Dieu’ et la Femme ‘Gloire de l’Homme,’” 178.

appearance as the divine *imago*-bearer.”⁶³ Before the creation of the world the persons of the Trinity “communicated with each other, and loved each other (John 17:5–8, 21–24).”⁶⁴ With creation, God broadened the circle of communication to include mankind. This communication implies “a human capacity to grasp and respond to His [God’s] verbal address.”⁶⁵ If man utilizes his capacity for communication in “articulately and intelligently responding” to God’s call, he brings glory to God in his own unique way.⁶⁶

Any attempt to define the content of the divine image must take account of these facts. “The ability to know and love God must stand forth prominently in any attempt to ascertain precisely what the image of God is.”⁶⁷ The role of reason in this matter is hotly debated. Clark argues that reason *is* the image of God, because morality and fellowship both require the use of reason.⁶⁸ This, however, would only necessitate that reason is part, or at least a precondition, of the image.

Whatever else may be said about the exact content of the image, it certainly implies a capacity for fellowship and communication with God. As such it underlies all of revelation.⁶⁹ The image implies that “the communication system of God and that of man are not disjoint.”⁷⁰ This assures us of the intelligibility of God’s revelation:

By dependence upon and fidelity to divine revelation, the surviving *imago* assures the human intelligibility of divine disclosure. . . . It qualifies man not only as a carrier of objective metaphysical truth about God’s nature and ways, but more particularly as a receiver of the special revelational truth of redemption.⁷¹

We must add that this is valid only if reason submits to and fellowships with God, which presupposes a regenerate state (1 Cor

⁶³Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, 2:126. See also Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 2:162, and Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 204.

⁶⁴Schaeffer, *He Is There And He Is Not Silent*, 16, 65.

⁶⁵Packer, “The Adequacy of Human Language,” 214.

⁶⁶T. A. Hoble, “Our Knowledge of God According to John Calvin,” *EvQuar* 54 (January–March 1982) 8. Perhaps the fact that “God created man in His own image . . . ; male and female He created them” (Gen 1:27) indicates that communication between a man and his wife is to be a reflection of the fellowship and communication in the Trinity, especially since marriage joins a man and a woman, two individuals, into one whole.

⁶⁷Feinberg, “The Image of God,” 246.

⁶⁸Clark, “The Image of God in Man,” 218

⁶⁹*ISBE*, s.v. “God, the Image of,” J. Orr, 2:1264.

⁷⁰K. L. Pike, “The Linguist and Axioms Concerning the Language of Scripture,” *JASA* 26 (1974) 48.

⁷¹Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, 2:130. See also Packer, “The Adequacy of Human Language,” 215–16.

2:11-12). Does this mean we understand God's language, the vehicle of his revelation to us? Although God can certainly communicate without language (e.g., through natural revelation, dreams, visions, etc.), his saving communication to the non-apostolic, non-prophetic believer takes the form of written revelation and thus involves God's use of language. Although man is certainly different from God (he is a sinner, he is finite, he is time-and-space-bound), his possession of the image of God seems to ensure that God and man share enough crucial attributes (the ability to reason, the capacity for relationship, etc.) to make a shared language possible. Thus, not only is general revelation possible, but also a special revelation involving language that is intelligible to man. The basic likeness of intellect between the divine and the human seems to provide for divine-to-human intelligibility through language as well as other vehicles of revelation.

Empirical knowledge theory held that human language does not naturally speak of God; that it cannot speak legitimately of the supernatural. The Bible, on the other hand, paints a different picture. Man is truly man as he responds to and fellowships with God. The doctrine of the divine image in man implies that creature and Creator can relate together and possess an adequate shared communication system for that purpose. There can be little doubt, then, contrary to much contemporary thinking, that human language legitimately communicates about the supernatural.⁷² Consequently, to speak about God is not to "stretch" ordinary language as many linguists today would aver. "What is unnatural is the 'shrinking' of language reflected in the supposition that it can talk easily and naturally only of physical objects."⁷³

Human Language Originated with God

One of the problems for modern philosophy and evolutionary thinking is the origin of language. If words originated as conventional signs for ideas or impressions that arose from human experience, then it remains incomprehensible how the first of these conventional signs could be understood.

The Biblical Adam and Eve, or the first two evolutionary savages, would not have talked to one another. Adam would have selected a

⁷²This does not, of course, imply that man can exhaustively understand any supernatural concept. All that is claimed is that God can use human language as an adequate vehicle of divine truth; and man, in the image of God, has been created as a moral agent, accountable to act on this truth which he is capable of understanding. See also R. Nicole, "A Reply to 'Language and Theology,'" *GordRev* 1:4 (December 1955) 144.

⁷³Packer, "The Adequacy of Human Language," 214.

sound for tree, sun, or air, and Eve would have had no idea what it referred to.⁷⁴

If evolutionary theory were true, then, it is likely that Eve had no idea what Adam was trying to communicate.

The problem is only further complicated when the biblical account is fully considered. Some of the words in the Genesis account may have been derived by abstraction from experience (though that is hard to imagine), but to expect Adam to accomplish all this in one day would be too taxing even for his superior capacities.⁷⁵

Further analysis of the Genesis record yields important data about the origin of human language. Genesis describes God as the first language user, and “shows us that human thought and speech have their counterparts and archetypes in Him.”⁷⁶ God instituted language as the vehicle of communication between man and himself. Appropriately, the first experience of man described in Genesis is the hearing of God’s blessing and his command to fill the earth and subdue it (Gen 1:28). Human language, then, originated not with man’s observation of creation but with man hearing God’s voice.

Eternal Truth in Changing Human Language

The basis for today’s linguistic and cultural diversity resides in God’s judgment at the tower of Babel. God purposefully diversified man’s language and as a result the people scattered over the whole earth (Gen 11:7–9; cf. also 10:31). Since then, of course, languages have continued to diversify and develop, according to the degree of isolation of people groups.

Observing the relationship between language and culture, some have advanced the idea that language, as it changes and develops within any given culture, cannot be the vehicle of eternal, unchanging truth. Propositional revelation is not seen as absolute, universal truth, but as relative to culture. Curtis supports this position by the observations that every language offers its “speakers and interpreters a ready-made interpretation of the world” and that every language changes over time.⁷⁷ But Curtis supposes that once universal and unchanging truth has become embedded in human language, this truth must change along with the language.

⁷⁴Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation*, 131.

⁷⁵It is true that one can distinguish a great variety in the levels of communication of different species, from chemical to instinctive to cognitive. These levels, though, do not necessarily imply evolutionary progress. They merely show that the various species have an adequate communication system that enables its members to interact with one another.

⁷⁶Packer, “The Adequacy of Human Language,” 214.

⁷⁷Curtis, “Language and Theology,” 104.

But it is wrong to assume that a vehicle must alter its contents. Our language is quite different from that spoken in biblical times, and this certainly implies the need for sound exegesis to uncover the truth couched in ancient language. But the biblical writers seem not to consider this an insurmountable problem. Paul states in Rom 15:4 that the whole OT is relevant for our instruction. Even in Paul's day that document was centuries old. Yet he did not see the slightest need to adjust his claim about the usefulness of the OT.⁷⁸

God's judgment at Babel directly addresses this situation:

It is *God* who is responsible for the linguistic diversity springing from Babel, and it was obviously not his purpose to frustrate his own "stream of true prophetic interpretation" which he introduced into the world. (emphasis original)⁷⁹

God evidently expects us to grasp and act on his word. Therefore, from the divine perspective, there is no great trouble in communicating divine eternal truth in changing human language.

God's Perfect Accommodation to Human Language

Some theologians suggest that, in order to communicate with man, God had to accommodate himself to man to such an extent that his communication manifests the inevitable error and mutability of human language. After all, we may argue that God originated language, but he also allowed sinful man to be (sinfully) creative in language.⁸⁰ So is it not necessary for God to indulge this corruption?

Obviously not! When Moses asked to see God's glory (Exod 33:18ff.), he only saw God's back (v 23). The problem was not *God's ability* to show his glory to sinful man, but *man's capacity* to behold God's glory in full. God could not communicate his full glory to frail creatures like man, because it would mean instant death. Similarly, God condescends in his verbal communication with man by accommodating to man's finite capacity for understanding. The problem lies not only with the limits of language, but also with the limits of the human mind.

Later in history God showed his glory to mankind through Christ in the incarnation (John 1:14). This involved some measure of accommodation without setting aside his divinity (Phil 2:6–8). But if

⁷⁸See J. M. Frame, "Scripture Speaks For Itself," in *God's Inerrant Word* (ed. J. W. Montgomery; Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1974) 190.

⁷⁹D. B. Farrow, "The Inerrancy Issue in Methodological and Linguistic Perspective" (unpublished M.Div. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1980), 130. See also V. S. Poythress, "Adequacy of Language and Accommodation" (paper delivered at the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy Summit II, November 1982).

⁸⁰See Martin, "Special Revelation as Objective," 70.

Christ is truly the Word of God become flesh, then he did not accommodate himself to human form in any of its sinfulness.⁸¹ Christ did not sin (1 Pet 2:22) and therefore his accommodation to man in the incarnation is perfect, without sin, yet realistic since he was truly a man.⁸² Similarly, God can accommodate to human language and communicate eternal truth without admixture of error or corruption as commonly happens when man uses the same language.

The Validity of Revealed Propositional Truth

Christ's incarnation has further relevance to a biblical philosophy of language. Christ wholly accepted the truth of the OT. He frequently referred to it with the phrase "It is written," indicating its authority. "He relied on propositional statements to convey truth in and of themselves and to convey it accurately."⁸³ Christ submitted to the authority of the Scripture, interpreting it in terms of propositional truth: "Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" (Luke 24:26). Thus, Scripture imposed a *necessity* upon Christ.⁸⁴

Christ also demonstrated his stronger view of Scripture when he rebuked the Pharisees for their unbelief, since they did not believe the things Moses had written about him (John 5:45–47). Christ's attitude toward the OT was one of complete trust. He did not doubt that God had spoken, and that he had spoken intelligibly. He believed that the OT itself was God's word. His insistence upon the authority of even a form of a word (Matt 5:18; 22:32) showed that he believed it to be true down to the very words it employed.

In spite of this evidence, some believe that God could not address us in terms of propositions that are true. But note further that Jesus *did* speak in intelligible language:⁸⁵ "the common people heard Him gladly" (Mark 12:37). Clearly, several contemporary views of religious language become problematic on the basis of the incarnation alone.

Still others argue⁸⁶ that to concentrate on Jesus' teaching is to miss the point, because we are to be concerned with Jesus as a person. Yet, our Lord himself emphasized repeatedly the necessity of

⁸¹See Clark, *Karl Barth's Theological Method*, 120.

⁸²"Any linguistic theory that impoverishes language so as to separate man from divine discourse must attack the authenticity of the person and work of Christ himself" (Farrow, "The Inerrancy Issue in Methodological and Linguistic Perspective," 126).

⁸³C. Ryrie, *What You Should Know About Inerrancy* (Chicago: Moody, 1981) 77.

⁸⁴Frame, "Scripture Speaks For Itself," 188.

⁸⁵Clark, *Karl Barth's Theological Method*, 132.

⁸⁶See our earlier analysis of philosophical trends involved in this issue.

accepting his words if we love him.⁸⁷ The criterion by which one knows whether the person of Christ is accepted is to see whether his words are accepted and obeyed. There is an intimate relationship between propositions and the person of Christ: both are necessary for true discipleship. Propositions are the impetus for discipleship. A relationship with the person of Christ is the essence of discipleship.

Christ evidently never doubted that supernatural truth could be conveyed by means of propositions. He believed that God uses language to convey information, even about the supernatural world.

The Authority of Revealed Propositional Truth

Many have tried to divorce the authority of God's word from its truthfulness. Barth, for instance, maintained that Scripture still had authority over the Christian's life, even though its propositions were not regarded as inerrant. However, "Biblical authority is an empty notion unless we know how to determine what the Bible means."⁸⁸ God cannot impose absolute demands on us without clearly stating these demands. Therefore, the marriage of absolute authority with propositional truth is unavoidable if one is to maintain a clear perception of the nature of Christianity.⁸⁹

Historically, Christianity has well understood these things. It has always pointed to its written revelation as the authoritative source for faith and practice. Paul (2 Tim 3:16) and Peter (2 Pet 1:20–21) proclaimed the divine origin of these writings.⁹⁰ If this record is indeed God's record, then it carries his truth, his authority, and his power.⁹¹

But more than that, when one considers the biblical data it becomes plain that the Bible itself never makes a distinction between truthfulness and authority. Whenever God's authority is expressed, it is connected with his word, whether spoken or written. A sampling of some biblical statements will suffice to demonstrate the point.

Gen 26:5 says that God blessed Abraham "because Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws." What are these requirements, commands, decrees and

⁸⁷ Matt 7:24–29; Luke 8:21; 9:26; John 5:21, 38; 8:31, 37, 47, 51, 55; 10:27; 12:47–50; 14:15, 21, 23–24; 15:7, 10, 14; 17:6, 8, 17; 18:37. Cf. also 1 John 2:3–5; 3:22; 5:2–3; 2 John 6; 2 Tim 6:3; Rev 12:17; 14:12. See Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, 3:484, and Frame, "Scripture Speaks For Itself," 184.

⁸⁸ Farrow, "The Inerrancy Issue in Methodological and Linguistic Perspective," 132.

⁸⁹ P. D. Feinberg, "The Meaning of Inerrancy," in Geisler, *Inerrancy*, 285.

⁹⁰ N. B. Stonehouse, "The Authority of the New Testament," in *The Infallible Word* (ed. N. B. Stonehouse and P. Woolley; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1978) 107.

⁹¹ Frame, "Scripture Speaks For Itself," 195.

laws? It would seem that they refer to God's promises as in Genesis 12, 15, 17 and other places. Abraham, therefore, accepted God's words and obeyed him.

Exod 24:7, "Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, 'We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey.'" But notice that they had not heard the Lord speak; they had only heard Moses read from a book. Yet the people obeyed, because they knew that these *written* words carried no less authority than if the Lord himself had spoken to them.⁹²

Exod 24:12, "... the law and commands I have written for their instruction." The instruction again is concerned with *written* words. In this case, the Lord himself did the writing!⁹³

Exod 31:11, "'They are to make them just as I commanded you.'" Bezalel and Oholiab were to manufacture the appliances that were to be placed in the Tent of Meeting. The plan according to which they were to be made was given by God. If this plan was not in plain, ordinary language, how could the workers have known what to make? This kind of plan had to be fairly precise; otherwise there would have been no plan at all.

Another important concept is the covenant. This was a written document setting forth the terms of a treaty between a suzerain and his vassal. In Israel the written document was to serve as a witness against the Israelites (Deut 31:26). Other passages warn against subtracting from this covenant.⁹⁴ The emphasis is again on the *written* word and its authority.

Deut 6:17 admonishes, "Be sure to keep the commands of the Lord your God and the stipulations and decrees He has given you." Here we see that God's people are called back to his written word.⁹⁵

In Matt 5:18 our Lord said, "'I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of the pen will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.'" "The indissolubility of the law extends to its every jot and tittle,"⁹⁶ and is clearly interwoven with a written document.

Matt 22:32, "... 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?' He is not the God of the dead but of the living." The argument here depends on the very form of the verb "to be." So God's word is clearly identified with the written record.

⁹²Frame, "Scripture Speaks for Itself," 186.

⁹³Ibid. See Exod 31:18; 32:10; 34:1; Deut 4:1; 9:10f.; 10:2-4.

⁹⁴Deut 4:2; 12:32. Cf. Prov 30:6; Rev 22:18. See Frame, "Scripture Speaks For Itself," 187 and E. J. Young, "The Authority of the Old Testament," in *The Infallible Word*, 67.

⁹⁵Frame, "Scripture Speaks For Itself," 188. See Deut 4:1-8; 5:27-33; 6:24f.; 7:9-11; 8:11; etc.

⁹⁶J. Murray, "The Attestation of Scripture," in *The Infallible Word*, 22.

References can of course be multiplied, but the point is clear. God's word is identified with the written record, and this written record carries God's authority. To obey the record is to obey God; to disobey the record is to disobey God.⁹⁷ God's authority cannot be divorced from his written revelation. This written revelation must be clear to be authoritative. Hence, revealed propositions carry the same authority as if God had spoken directly in an audible voice.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

At the outset it was observed that the debate concerning the adequacy of human language arose in the context of contemporary philosophical analysis. The problem of religious language was intimately bound up with a sceptical view of religious knowledge. Our discussion of Hume, Kant, Barth and others yielded the insight that doubts about the adequacy of religious language were rooted in an empirical theory of knowledge. This empirical basis of epistemology did not leave room for meaningful religious language. Even Kant's and Barth's attempts to restore some validity to religious language essentially failed. Therefore, most philosophers and even many theologians rejected religious language as an adequate vehicle of divine, inerrant truth; they rejected the biblical view of revelation. However, they were operating in the arena of philosophical analysis, not in the arena of biblical reflection.

Operating within the biblical arena we uncovered no objection to religious language. Instead, we found that without a doubt biblical data supported inerrant, divine communication to man by way of human language. God created man in his own image, so man has the necessary faculties to communicate intelligibly with his Creator. Language, therefore, can legitimately speak about the supernatural. Moreover, God originated human language, even in all its diversity, and uses those languages to communicate unchanging eternal truth. God's accommodation to human language does not involve error and so the truth and authority of propositional revelation are upheld, whether the communication is verbal or written.

The Bible, therefore, teaches that human language is an adequate vehicle to communicate divine truth. As long as one submits to the framework of biblical revelation, there is an adequate foundation for biblical thinking about the role of language in communication between God and man. In the face of the evidence discussed above, only unbelief would turn from propositional revelation to some other view of language, perhaps as dictated by currents in contemporary philosophy.

⁹⁷Young, "The Authority of the Old Testament," 67.

LITERARY ANALYSIS AND THE UNITY OF NAHUM

RICHARD D. PATTERSON and MICHAEL E. TRAVERS

Exegesis that includes careful attention to internal matters—theme and development, structure, and features of literary style—can help resolve perennial problems of interpretation. One such difficulty involves the unity and authorship of the book of Nahum. Conclusions reached from the shared contributions of biblical and literary data argue strongly for the unity of the whole prophecy that bears Nahum's name. The literary devices are so demonstrably a necessary and integral part of the theme and structure of the work that this book is best viewed as the production of a single author whose literary skill and artistry rival those of any of the OT prophets.

* * *

INTRODUCTION

Most modern higher critical interpreters conclude that of Nahum's forty-seven verses, at least one-third are spurious. Critics are generally agreed in denying Nahum's authorship of parts of the title, the “acrostic poem” at 1:2–10,¹ the “hopeful sayings” of 1:12–13; 2:1, 3, and the closing dirge at 3:18–19.² Thus, literary analysis of Nahum has often been attended by the uniform denial of the unity of the book.³

Although conservative scholars have defended the disputed portions of the book,⁴ little has been done to demonstrate its essential

¹All textual references follow the standard English format rather than MT which renders 1:15 as the first verse of chapter two, making fourteen verses in the Hebrew rather than the thirteen of the English editions.

²For details, see J. A. Bewer, *The Literature of the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962) 147; and J. M. P. Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Micah, Zephaniah and Nahum* (ICC, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1985) 268–70.

³See, for example, R. H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper, 1941) 594–95; and G. A. Smith, *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, Rev. Ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1929), 2:81–88.

⁴In addition to the various conservative commentaries, note the discussion in R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969)

unity on purely internal grounds.⁵ By focusing primarily on the literary aspects of Nahum's prophecy—its theme and development, its basic structure, and its stylistic features—it will be shown that Nahum is the work of a single author. The appropriateness of such a point of inquiry, besides being a natural part of the investigative process, is underscored by Nahum's generally recognized high literary artistry. Thus Bewer remarks: "Nahum was a great poet. His word-pictures are superb, his rhetorical skill is beyond praise . . ."⁶, and J. M. P. Smith points out,

Though the rhythm and metre of Nahum are not so smooth and regular as is the case with some Heb. prophets, yet in some respects the poetry of Nahum is unsurpassed in the OT. His excellence is not in sublimity of thought, depth of feeling, purity of motive, or insight into truth and life. It is rather in his descriptive powers. He has an unexcelled capacity to bring a situation vividly before the mind's eye. . . . Accurate and detailed observation assists in giving his pictures verisimilitude. Lowth rightly said, "Ex omnibus minoribus prophetis nemo videtur aequare sublimitatem, ardorem et audaces spiritus Nahumi . . ."⁷

Although these remarks refer to the portions of Nahum considered to be authentic, this same high literary quality characterizes the entire book.

THEME AND DEVELOPMENT

A casual reading of the prophecy reveals that Nahum deals with the destruction of Nineveh. Yet behind the opening pronouncement and subsequent shifting scenes of Nineveh's doom, lies a deeper, double truth: God is the sovereign judge (ch. 1) and controller (chs.

928–30; P. A. Verhoef, "Nahum, Book of," ZPEB, 4:356; and C. H. Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books* (Chicago: Moody, 1986) 218–21.

⁵Note, however, the helpful observations of H. D. Hummel, *The Word Becoming Flesh* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1979) 339–42; C. E. Armerding, *Nahum* (EBC, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 7:453; and R. J. Coggins, *Israel Among the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985) 6–8.

⁶Bewer, *Literature*, 148.

⁷J. M. P. Smith, *Nahum*, 273–74. See also P. C. Craigie, *Twelve Prophets* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 2:59, who affirms that the author of Nahum was a "poet of considerable ability and originality"; and Hummel, *Word*, 339, who observes, "It is everywhere agreed that stylistically Nahum easily heads the list of the minor prophets, excelling even Amos, and himself excelled in all Biblical literature only by Isaiah. Many of his deft, vivid, word-pictures are fully worthy of Isaiah himself. Some of their forcefulness is evident, even in translation, but much is inevitably also lost. Pfeiffer calls Nahum, 'the last of the great classical Hebrew poets,' and G. A. Smith observes that his rhythm 'rumbles and rolls, leaps and flashes, like the horsemen and chariots that he describes.' Similar encomiums could easily be multiplied."

2-3) of the destiny of earth's peoples. The book of Nahum deals with not only the doom of Nineveh at the hands of a just judge (ch. 1), but with a prophetic description of that city's destruction resulting from the operation of the divine government presided over by a wise controller of the affairs of mankind (chs. 2-3). Several subthemes also reinforce the purpose of the main theme, such as the revelation of the many facets of God's character, and the salvation and restoration of God's people Israel.

Chapter One centers on the declaration of Nineveh's doom while calling attention to God himself as a sovereign and just judge. The theme of the chapter is stated in the threefold repetition of the name Yahweh in the four lines of affirmation concerning God's avenging wrath. The reader's attention is thus drawn to a sovereign and just God who deals in judgment with the ungodly (1:2). This clear delineation of the theme of the first section of the book (ch. 1) is subsequently qualified in a twofold hymn to Yahweh (see Literary Features below) concerning the character and work of God: (1) although the Lord is long suffering he will assuredly judge the guilty with all the force that a sovereign God can muster (1:3-6); and (2) although the Lord is good and he tenderly cares for the righteous (particularly in times of affliction), he will destroy those who plot against him (1:7-10). These general remarks concerning the character and work of God are then applied directly to the current situation; Nineveh, the plotter and afflicter of God's people, will experience the just judgment of God, while a previously punished Judah will know relief from affliction and be restored to peace and joy (1:11-15).

The second section immediately repeats the theme of the judgment of Nineveh and the restoration of God's people (2:1-2). But in doing so, it is clear that the primary focus will be on a description of the actual siege and destruction of the doomed city. That theme is immediately carried forward in a visionary rehearsal of the actual attack against Nineveh (2:3-10), closed by a taunt song in which Assyria is compared to a lion trapped in Nineveh, its own den (2:11-13). The theme is developed further in a second description of the fall of Nineveh (given in the form of a pronouncement of woe), but with distinctive emphasis upon the reasons for Nineveh's fall, particularly its rapacity (3:1-7). This section, too, is closed by a taunt song in which Nineveh is declared to be no better than mighty Thebes. She had counted on the same basic defensive features that Nineveh boasts; yet her recent fall is known to all. Nineveh's fate is certain: a sovereign God is about to judge the Assyrians and Nineveh for their boundless cruelty (3:8-19).

A proper reading of Nahum, then, shows that there is an essential unity to the entire book. Indeed, as C. Hassell Bullock affirms,

even the highly disputed “acrostic portion” of the first chapter “certainly is in harmony with the tenor of the book, and it beautifully prepares the stage for the major theme of the book.”⁸ Our discussion of the theme and development of the two major sections of Nahum has also shown that the author displays considerable art in the arrangement of his prophecies, a literary skill that makes the underlying structure readily discernible.

BASIC STRUCTURE

The analysis of the theme and development of Nahum makes certain that the chapters fall into two distinct sections (1 and 2–3) in which the theme is first stated in each portion (1:2; 2:1–2), and then developed in distinct major units (1:3–10, 11–15; 2:3–10, 11–13; 3:1–7, 8–19). Both sections end with a report going forth. In 1:15 the word about Nineveh’s fall is brought by a messenger bearing the good news; in 3:19 the news is received with rejoicing. A pattern of theme, development, and reaction marks each major section. The image of scattering marks the beginning and end of the second section (**מְפִירָץ**/‘scatterer,’ 2:1; and the scattered refugees from Nineveh, 3:18–19).⁹ Other organizational devices in chapters 2–3 include the aforementioned closing of each unit (2, 3) with a taunt song (2:11–13; 3:8–19), and the inactivity/activity of messengers (2:13b; 3:19).

The book of Nahum, therefore, is arranged in a basic bifid structure: 1:2–15; 2:1–3:19.¹⁰ The resultant structural scheme may be outlined as follows:

Superscription 1:1

The Doom of Nineveh
Declared (1:2–15)

The Demise of Nineveh
Described (2:1–3:19)

Theme:
God is a God of Justice who will

Theme:
God is a Just Governor of the

⁸Bullock, *Prophetic Books*, 220. C. F. Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 2:4 maintains that all three chapters are genuine and contain “one extended prophecy concerning Nineveh,” which is “depicted with pictorial liveliness and perspicuity.”

⁹The principle of literary bookending as a compilational technique is well attested in the Scriptures. One may note, for example, Ezekiel’s dumbness that encloses Ezekiel 3–24, the heading and colophon that encase Genesis 10, and the inclusion formed by the references to Jeremiah’s birth (Jer 1:5; 20:18). Indeed, the principle of bookending forms an integral part of the formal literary architecture of the book of Jeremiah, a subject that will be addressed by R. D. Patterson in a forthcoming article in *WTJ*.

¹⁰The concept of bifid structure as a compositional technique has been ably defended by W. H. Brownlee, *The Meaning of the Qumran Scrolls for the Bible* (Oxford: University Press, 1964) 236–59.

punish the wicked and avenge his own (1:2).

1. A Hymn to the Sovereign and Just God (1:2–10)
 - a. who defeats his foes (1:2–6)
 - b. who destroys the plotters (1:7–10)
2. Application of the Hymn to Nineveh and Judah (1:11–15)

N.B. The messenger of Good News for Judah (1:15)

nations who will punish wicked Nineveh and restore his own (2:1–2).

1. First description of Nineveh's demise (2:3–13)
 - a. Rehearsal of the attack vs. Nineveh (2:3–10)
 - b. Taunt song: the discredited city (2:11–13)
2. Second description of Nineveh's demise (3:1–19)
 - a. Reasons for the attack vs. Nineveh (3:1–7)
 - b. Taunt Song: the defenseless citadel (3:8–19)

N.B. The message of Good News for all (3:18–19)

D. W. Gooding affirms that such types of clear organizational structure argue for an original authorial intention, rather than for being the work of a later editorial redactor.¹¹

Additional confirmation of original authorial intent may be seen in the demonstrable thematic and verbal hooks that link the various smaller units.¹² Thus, the opening statement of theme (1:2) is hooked to the following thematic development via the catchword “Lord” and the theme of divine wrath (1:3–10); the idea of plotting links 1:3–10 with 1:11–15, and destroying binds 1:11–15 and 2:1–2. Other hooks link the following units: attacking (2:1–2; 2:3–10), plundering (2:3–10;

¹¹D. W. Gooding, “The Literary Structure of Daniel and Its Implications,” *TB* 32 (1982) 43–79.

¹²For the principle of literary hooks, see H. Van Dyke Parunak, “Transitional Techniques in the Bible,” *JBL* 102 (1983) 530–32; John Bright, *Jeremiah* (AB; Garden City; Doubleday, 1956) lxxiv; and W. McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986) 1:1xxxiv. Called also a link (Parunak), catchword (Bright), or stitchword (McKane), the point is, as U. Cassuto, *Biblical and Oriental Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1973) 1:228, points out, that hooking was a common compilational principle by which sections were arranged “on the basis of the association of ideas or words.” Cassuto himself has demonstrated the widespread use of this technique by illustrating its employment in Leviticus, Numbers, Canticles, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and the Minor Prophets.

2:11–13), ‘chariots’ and the phrase “I am against you” (2:11–13; 3:1–7), and death and destruction (3:1–7; 3:8–19). Still further, the important word **הִנֵּה**/‘behold’ punctuates the book at crucial points in the individual units (1:15; 2:13; 3:5, 13). All of this suggests an essential unity for the whole book of Nahum.

LITERARY FEATURES

Further evidence for authorial intention and the essential unity of the book of Nahum is the careful use of literary devices.¹³ Not only is there a thematic and topical structure to the book, as the preceding data suggest, but there is also a literary richness to this short prophecy.

In Nahum, there are two literary genres, in addition to the oracular nature of the piece as a whole, that affect the presentation of the material of the book: the narrative and the poetic. Each genre has its own particular conventions which both writer and reader accept. Accordingly, each genre establishes certain expectations in the reader as to how the material within that genre is developed.¹⁴ Narrative, for instance, turns on the cause/effect relationships between events in time, thereby establishing the later event as the result of the earlier event. The most directly narrative portion of the book of Nahum is the author’s narrative of the destruction of Nineveh chronicled in 2:1–10. In this section, the reader anticipates a series of events, each of which adds to the cumulative effect (in this case) of the utter desolation of Nineveh. Poetry, on the other hand, turns on the intense and often elliptical relationships of words, images, tropes and rhythms. Poetry intensifies emotion and underscores the totality of our humanness in response to a given word picture. The most obviously poetical sections of Nahum are the opening hymn depicting God as an avenger (1:1–10) and the final section of the piece, Nahum’s “taunt song” of 3:8–19. In these sections, the writer affects his reader’s emotions most directly, thereby involving the whole humanness of the reader in a response to the oracle against Nineveh.

In the first major unit of the book, the introductory Hymn of Praise to God (1:1–10), Nahum employs a wide variety of tropes to

¹³The issue of authorial intention and the possibility of a reader obtaining an objective interpretation of a text is a vexed one today both in biblical hermeneutics and in literary criticism. For the classic defense of meaning as authorial intention, see E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979) 27, 32, 44–46, 127ff., 164ff., 209–12, 217, 224ff. For an important further consideration of the issue as it relates to biblical hermeneutics, see Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) 10–17, 145, 303, 315.

¹⁴For a full defense of the influence of genre in literature, see Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (New York: Atheneum, 1968) 13, 95–99, 111, 246–326.

develop two specific pictures of God, one *vis a vis* Nineveh and one for Judah. Since this hymn is a poem, extensive use of tropological language is expected. Nahum's first trope is a metaphor: "His (God's) way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and clouds are the dust of his feet" (1:3b). This is a graphic picture of God's invincible power, his omnipotence; who can withstand a whirlwind, i.e., a tornado? God's power is further suggested by the comparison of clouds to the mere dust of his feet; he is indeed strong beyond imagination. The reference to storms is appropriate in two ways. First, Yahweh is the God of the storm; second, the association of Yahweh with the storm may also be an attack on Baal, the Canaanite god of the storm, and on Hadad, the Assyrian god of the storm. Israel's praise of Yahweh as the One who controls nature is a source of terror to Nineveh, whose god Hadad is shown thereby to be impotent.

The terror of God's angry approach is underscored by the image of 1:5:

The mountains quake before him
and the hills melt away.
The earth trembles at his presence,
the world and all who live in it.

Here is a vivid picture of the only possible response to God's anger. The earth—even the mountains, a symbol of great strength—shakes before the mere presence of God's anger, much less the execution of his indignation. What can a mere city, in this case Nineveh, do to withstand such a force?

To complete this first picture of God's anger, Nahum compares God's wrath to a fire in a simile: "His wrath is poured out like fire;¹⁵ the rocks are shattered before him" (1:6b). As with a whirlwind, who can withstand a fire so hot that it bursts rocks apart? God's anger is "poured out," like a liquid fire, like molten lava that consumes everything in its path. The whole city, not just its inhabitants, appears to be in danger of complete annihilation. It is through such tropes as the metaphor, image and simile that Nahum establishes the thorough destructiveness, the utter terror of God's wrath: who can withstand him?

In a dramatic shift, Nahum the poet moves from God's wrath against Nineveh to his compassion for Judah. In a one verse contrasting portrait, Nahum uses a metaphor to compare the God of

¹⁵The importance of "fire" as a key word (cf. 1:6; 2:4; 3:13, 15) is emphasized by C. Armerding, EBC 7:451–52. Armerding suggests that "fire" and key words such as "consume"/"devour" (1:10; 2:13; 3:12–13, 15^{bis}), and "destroy"/"cut down" (1:14–15; 2:13; 3:15), as well as about a dozen strands of motifs that run through the course of the book, argue strongly for the thematic unity of the book.

Judah to a refuge (1:7). While this is a typical OT and especially Davidic metaphor for God's protection (cf. Ps 37:37–40), it takes on particular poignancy in its context here. All around this picture, Nahum portrays the complete impending destruction of Nineveh in the most vivid manner. Yet here he speaks of a refuge for Judah specifically for the "times of trouble." What comfort to Judah! What amplified terror to Nineveh, to know that, since they have never sought God, their destruction is specific and local—their own judgment! Israel is a literary foil to Nineveh—blessed so bountifully as to underscore Nineveh's judgment in a poignant contrast.

Building on this contrast, Nahum returns to the destruction of Nineveh, now however focusing on the inhabitants of the city (his foes) rather than on the might of God. In an image, the author depicts the Ninevites as impotent and frustrated on every hand:

They will be entangled among thorns
and drunk from their wine;
they will be consumed like dry stubble. (1:10)

Rendered defenseless because of their inebriation, the Ninevites are compared to dry stubble, burned immediately upon contact with any fire and absolutely annihilated by the lava-like fire of God's wrath. The metaphor within the image intensifies the pathos of the destruction of human beings: Nineveh is not just bricks and mortar, it is a city of people about to be killed (a motif to which Nahum will return later, the innocent and the guilty).

In the second unit of the chapter (1:11–15), Nahum quotes the Lord in address to Judah. This is a brief passage of comfort for Judah in the face of God's anger against Nineveh. It is an assurance that he will not extend his wrath against Judah itself. Curiously, there is but one trope in this short speech, a typical metaphor comparing the unjust oppression of Judah by Nineveh to a yoke and shackles (1:13). These the Lord will break and tear away. The metaphor is both agrarian (yoke) and urban (shackles, as in a prison), but otherwise it is quite conventional. Once again, Israel is a foil to Nineveh, comforted in the face of their terror. Nahum suggests in this conventional trope that God is self-consistent, a judge of the unrighteousness of Nineveh and a blessing to Judah/Israel.

In the third unit of the book, Nahum details the destruction of Nineveh (2:1–10). This portion is narrative in genre and therefore chronological in organization. However, there are a number of similes in this account, as well as various other tropes, which underscore the emotion and pathos of God's judgment and attack. Nahum begins in verses 3–6 with a most graphic image of the actual attackers. The shields are red; warriors are covered in scarlet (both presumably with

blood); chariots "flash" and "storm." It is a picture of the frenzy of battle. Within the image of 2:3–6, Nahum incorporates a simile comparing the rapid motion of the chariots to "flaming torches" and "lightning" (2:4). Not only does the simile point out the chariots' speed and power for destruction, but it is also consistent with the earlier motif of God's wrath as fire. Here is one of the agents of God's fiery wrath, the attackers' chariots.

It is in this narrative unit that Nahum creates one of his most pathetic scenes, that of the terror of the innocent people of Nineveh. In a simile, Nahum depicts the anguish of the innocent slave girls of the city as the moan of doves (2:7). The slave girls are helpless victims of their masters' demise. The simile evokes pathos, compassion for the slaves' imminent deaths. In a related device, a synecdoche, Nahum shows the people of Nineveh as absolutely terrified: "Hearts melt, knees give way, bodies tremble, every face grows pale" (2:10b). Again, the attention here to the civilians, not the soldiers, is particularly pathetic, though God's judgment is complete. Perhaps two effects result from depicting civilians in terror: first, Nineveh is further terrorized; second, Judah is comforted beyond measure.

The climax of the narrative of Nineveh's destruction is the metaphor of the lions' den in 2:11–13. Nineveh, whose insignia was a lion, is compared ironically to a lions' den. This den, however, is no longer a refuge for its cubs, no longer the lair of the powerful predator. God will attack the very home of the Ninevite plunderers, repaying in kind their earlier cruelty to their victims. The irony underlying this metaphor allows Nahum to use it as a little "Taunt Song" to flaunt Nineveh's complete demise.

Immediately following the narrative of Nineveh's destruction, Nahum pronounces a series of woes upon the doomed city (3:1–7). This unit eludes final generic classification, though it is closer to poetry than to narrative. Because of the frequent ellipses in the first part of this section (vv. 1–4), the pronounced woes are particularly intense while the emotion increases.

In the first three verses of chapter three, the writer portrays a number of graphic images of the impending military destruction. In the first image, whips crack, wheels clatter, horses gallop, and chariots jolt (3:2). This opening image draws the reader's attention to the machines of war. The poet uses this picture to heighten the terror which he shows most graphically in the next image. Nahum moves from a scene depicting the charging chariots to a second image, a terrifying view of the people involved in the conflict. This image in 3:3 is itself bifid in structure, just as the book of Nahum at large is. The first scene is that of the attacking cavalry, swords flashing and spears glittering. The attention here is on the weapons, surely a means of

underscoring the imminent death to the Ninevites. The second scene in the verse is a picture of the genocide itself: the dead are piled, bodies are without number, so much so that the Ninevites cannot escape without stumbling over their fallen friends. The effect of this image is poignant: the attackers are merciless, and the victims are utterly annihilated. Intensifying the emotional impact of this complete military rout is the ellipsis maintained throughout the two verses. The lack of connectives increases the tempo of the scene, thereby suggesting the irresistible force of the attacker.

In the concluding verses of the unit of woes, Nahum uses an extended simile to portray the extreme shame that Nineveh will experience as a result of God's judgment. He compares Nineveh to a harlot and a "mistress of sorceries." Guilty of spiritual prostitution and witchcraft, she will be utterly exposed to the contempt of the nations. Stripped and pelted with filth, she, not Israel, will be a spectacle (cf. Deut 28:37). Everyone will desert her. There is no need of a homily here; the intense shame and final degradation that is presented in the picture of Nineveh as an exposed harlot is enough. Nahum then carries over the emotions of shame and contempt, though not the metaphor, into his final section, the concluding Taunt Song.

In the final Taunt Song (3:8–19), Nahum flaunts the utter helplessness of the Ninevites. In this unit, he employs a series of brief tropes to finally impress Nineveh that all is indeed lost; God's judgment is irresistible and irrevocable. Curiously, Nahum relies most on the simile, the weakest of tropes, perhaps to suggest that all he can do is approximate the absolute terror and helplessness that will affect Nineveh. Words fail him. In 3:12, Nahum compares the Ninevite fortress to a ripe fig tree, readily dropping its fruit into the attackers' mouths. Nahum has not emphasized the plunder of gold and silver in the book; rather, the plunder in Nahum's account is people—innocent and guilty Ninevites alike. What horror this brief simile evokes!

Nahum underscores the futility of Nineveh's attempts to defend themselves with a series of references to locusts.¹⁶ Locusts, able to strip a field entirely of its grain, leaving the people destitute of both food and livelihood, are a conventional engine of divine judgment. Egypt in Moses' time is perhaps the most obvious recipient of this particular plague. Here Nahum doubles the plague of locusts in that he finds them inside Nineveh as well as outside. The fire and sword of the attackers are compared to locusts (3:15), a typical use of the plague of locusts coming upon the victims from the outside. But

¹⁶See Joel 2:4–9 and the remarks of R. D. Patterson in EBC 7:248. For locusts themselves, see the helpful excursus of S. R. Driver, *The Books of Joel and Amos* (Cambridge: University Press, 1915) 84–92; and J. D. Whiting, "Jerusalem's Locust Plague," *National Geographic Magazine* 28 (1915) 518–50.

Nahum compares some Ninevites themselves to locusts. In 3:16 the merchants of the city are like locusts, having robbed the city of its money and then fleeing, treacherously deserting the city in its final hour. Likewise the guards—and even the civic officials—flee like the locusts in the noon heat. No defense and no government! Stripped within and under siege from without, Nineveh stands defenseless. Nahum emphasizes the absolute vulnerability of Nineveh with these few brief similes. It is too late for Jonah's invitation to repentance.

Literary features abound in this short prophecy. Two of the more important include Nahum's use of chiasmus and an acrostic poem. The chiasmus opens his prophecy:

a A jealous God	אֱלֹהִים קָפֹא
b and an avenger is Yahweh	נָקֵם יְהוָה
b' Yahweh is an avenger	נָקֵם יְהוָה
a' and Lord of wrath.	וּבֶעָל חֶמֶת

That a chiasmus¹⁷ is intended is obvious from the familiar parallels in the first and fourth lines: God (אֱלֹהִים/Baal, jealous/wrath. The first parallel pair is a common one throughout northwest Semitic literature; the second is particularly apropos of the relationship between God and Israel. Taken into formal union via the Sinaitic Covenant, Israel knew God's love as his special people. That love of God is often depicted as that of a husband jealously guarding his wife (Isa 54:5). Unfortunately, in her continued idolatry, Israel had proven herself an unfaithful and unrepentant wife (Jer 2:1–3; 5), who must accordingly face the righteous wrath of Yahweh (cf. Ezek 16:35–42). Thankfully, because God is a merciful God, when the deserved punishment has run its course, God will restore his repentant wife (cf. Hos 1–3) and turn his righteous wrath to those unbelieving nations whom he had used to chastise Israel/Judah (Ezek 36:6–7; 38:18–19).

A further nuance in the chiastic structure may lie in the use of בֶעָל with חֶמֶת/'wrath'. In addition to being the name of the Canaanite storm god, the noun *ba`al* may refer to an owner (Exod 22:7), master (Isa 1:3), ruler (Isa 16:8), or husband (Deut 24:4). All of these meanings may be felt here. Because Yahweh is Israel's owner, master, and husband, his wrath can either be spent against her or extended on her behalf. By the word *ba`al*, Nahum could also perhaps be reporting that despite the rampant idolatry initiated by King Manasseh, Yahweh (not Ba`al) is the true Lord of the universe (cf. vv. 3b–5) who will deal in righteous wrath with sin and rebellion. It may also be a veiled attack on Hadad, the Assyrian storm god.

¹⁷For chiasmic structure, see R. L. Alden, "Chiastic Psalms: A Study in the Mechanics of Semitic Poetry in Psalms 1–50," *JETS* 17 (1974) 11–28.

As a further expansion in 1:2b demonstrates, the assertion that God is an avenger is the center of focus in Nahum's chiasmus. As a God of holiness and justice, God reserves the right of vengeance to himself (Deut 32:35, 41; Rom 12:19). However the course of history might seem to be unfolding, God will take proper vengeance on all nature of sin (Isa 63:1–4). Not only will he punish his covenant breaking people (Lev 26:24–25), but he will punish all his foes, particularly those who have dealt harshly with his chastised and repentant people (Isa 34:8; 61:2). Thus, the four lines are unmistakably chiasmatic.

But this is no mere indication of Nahum's artistry; the chiasmus is meaningfully designed to arrest the reader's attention at the outset. The three figures treated in this short chiasmus, jealousy, wrath, and vengeance, set the theme of the book before its readers: (1) As a jealous God, Yahweh demands the absolute devotion that only the true and sovereign God deserves. (2) In his righteous wrath Yahweh alone can and will deal justly with all who sin as his justice dictates. (3) As an avenging God, Yahweh will discipline, defend, or deliver as his holiness demands. If indeed God's people Israel experience God's chastisement, how much more an unbelieving, arrogant Assyria/Nineveh? Not only is this chiasmus the key to the hymn that continues through verse 10, but to the *whole prophecy*. All that follows in both halves (1 and 2–3) of the book flows from it, a fact that argues further for the unity and single authorship of the book.

Critical scholars generally have recognized in the majestic hymn to Yahweh (1:2–10) the skeleton of an acrostic poem, which they assume was added by a later editor, but in the course of its transmission, has suffered some corruption and displacement. The varying results arrived at by the individual scholars¹⁸ have caused most conservative commentators to reject the theory altogether.¹⁹ However, the hymnic nature of verses 2–10 is undeniable and while it may be impossible to recover the "lost acrostic" with demonstrable certainty, the task may not be totally without merit. Thus Hummel remarks,

Efforts to recover the original form of the acrostic poem have proved entirely futile, and some deny the existence of such an underlying pattern altogether. However, it does appear that the letters of the Hebrew alphabet can be followed fairly accurately down to *lamedh*.²⁰

¹⁸See the discussion in J. M. P. Smith, *Nahum*, 295–97.

¹⁹Note, for example, Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1974) 353. See also Walter A. Maier, *The Book of Nahum* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980) 52–62.

²⁰H. D. Hummel, *Word*, 339.

TABLE 1

<i>Verses</i>	<i>Letter</i>	<i>Lines</i>	<i>Occurrences</i>
1–3a	aleph	6 (+) 2	6 (+) 2
3b	beth	2	3
4a	gimel	2	1
4b	daleth	2	(I)*
5a	he	2	3
5b	waw	2	4
6a	zayin	2	1
6b	ḥeth	2	1
7a	teth	2	1
7b–8a	yodh	2	1
8b–10	kaph	8	7

*Accomplished via text critical methods.

If, then, rather than resorting to wild emendations and wholesale transpositions, one views the beginning and ending of the canonical poem to be deliberately weighted so as to form a distinct frame for the psalm, a fairly consistent picture emerges: *aleph*, six lines (vv. 2–3a), *beth*—*yodh*, two lines each, and eight lines of *kaph* (perhaps to balance the six lines of *aleph* plus the two lines of superscription). The point would be that in Nahum's acrostic arrangement, the prescribed letter of the alphabet need only occur within (not necessarily only as the first letter of the first word; cf. *zayin* and *yodh* lines) the line, although in several cases there is a deliberate concatenation of the letter in question in the line(s) devoted to it.²¹ Table 1 illustrates the data.

Applying these parameters to the acrostic poem, the only significant problems occur at verses 4 and 7b–8a. The former is the major crux because no *daleth* occurs in MT. As the verse now reads, it begins and ends with אָמַלְל “be withered.” That it originally was written as some adequate parallel root such as צָלֵל or צָמַל rests upon not only the needs of the acrostic pattern, but the fact that the ancient versions uniformly used two different words to express the Hebrew word(s) in question.²²

As for verses 7b–8a, it seems clear that the two lines are designed to complement the length (3/2) and structure of the *teth* lines:

Good (better) is Yahweh as (than) a fortress
in the day of distress

טוֹב יְהוָה לְמַעַז
בַּיּוֹם צְרָה

²¹Nahum's literary style displays a tendency to heap up numbers within a short space, for example: n/q (1:2–3a), g (1:5), § (1:15; 2:1), h (2:1), k (2:5), and m (2:1).

²²For details, see J. M. P. Smith, *Nahum*, 298. For the existence of Pu²al forms in Hebrew, see GKC ¶55d.

And he knows those who seek refuge in him
in the overwhelming flood.

וַיְדַע הָפֵץ בֹּ
וְבִשְׁעָף עֲבָר

It is evident, then, that an acrostic poem may be seen in these verses.²³ However, in the absence of further evidence in the Hebrew manuscript tradition, the case for an unbroken acrostic must remain unproven due to the absence of a *daleth* in verse four. Still, the presence of some acrostic elements does further illustrate Nahum's literary abilities.²⁴

CONCLUSION

Though a myriad of other devices can be found in the book of Nahum, among them the use of picturesque brevity, rhetorical questions, irony, and synecdoche, these examples support two theses: there was a single author to the book, one who was conscious of his use of genre and literary devices; and Nahum used literary devices to accomplish certain effects, not just to decorate an otherwise plain statement of God's judgment. The tropes emphasize the terror to Nineveh and accentuate the blessings upon Judah; they evoke an emotional experience of the judgment of God to supplement the intellectual understanding that the book contains. Not only do the literary devices assist and enrich the understanding of the meaning of the text, they are the very form and context in which the meaning is apprehended.²⁵ Finally, the literary devices in the book are patterned to reflect the bifid thematic structure suggested earlier.

In short, the literary devices are a necessary and integral part of the theme and structure of the book of Nahum, not merely a means of enhancing an otherwise mundane propositional statement. Because they are basic to the expression of Nahum's message, they demand that the reader respond in his totality as a human being, not just intellectually.

²³That there are copyists' errors in MT is certain, as recognized by biblical scholars of all persuasions. See, for example, J. Barton Payne, "The Validity of Numbers in Chronicles," *JNEAS* 11 (1978) 5–58; and E. Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 105–10. However, no essential doctrine is in any way impaired by these relatively few examples of textual corruption, and the essential trustworthiness of the Scriptures remains unassailable!

²⁴One may hold that Nahum himself may have composed the hymn of praise or may have adapted it from earlier material.

²⁵For the statement that metaphor, as an example of a trope, *constitutes* meaning, see Paul Ricoeur, "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling," *On Metaphor*, ed. Sheldon Sacks (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) 141–57. Ricoeur's thesis is that metaphor creates meaning, rather than embellishing it.

IS NATURAL THEOLOGY BIBLICAL?

STEPHEN R. SPENCER

Biblical data on God's self-disclosure through his creation clearly confirms the validity of natural revelation. Some apologists, however, advocate a natural theology that is derived from natural revelation. They argue that the unconverted can be introduced to God through natural theology.

The arguments for natural theology, however, are without biblical support. Natural theology is not a corollary of natural revelation, there are no examples of it in Scripture, and there is no biblical warrant for it, whether revelational, anthropological, or apologetic.

* * *

THE long-running debate over apologetic method between evidentialism and presuppositionalism (particularly of the Van Tilian variety) involves a wide range of issues. Out of that broad spectrum of dispute, it is sometimes difficult to demarcate precisely the dividing line between the two sides. It is even more difficult to find the source of that line of division. The issue of natural theology, however, should be recognized as the watershed of these two apologetic methods.¹

DEFINING NATURAL THEOLOGY

Though natural theology has been variously defined,² two basic definitions are noteworthy. First, natural theology denotes the development of an entire theological system without reference to revelation. This sense seems equivalent to natural religion, of which deism is a classic example. No known evangelical espouses this type of natural

¹I have argued elsewhere that contrary to the current consensus the two sides do not divide over the use of evidence or over engaging in argumentation with unbelievers ("Fideism and Presuppositionalism," *GTJ* 8:1 [March 1987] 89–99), nor over the common ground between believers and unbelievers ("Common Ground," Mid-Western Regional Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, 1983).

²For example, J. V. Langmead Casserley identifies four senses: *Graceful Reason* (London: Longmans and Green, 1955) 2–5.

theology, and several explicitly reject it while espousing another type.³

The second meaning of natural theology differs significantly from the first meaning. Some propose that natural theology is the establishment of the existence and to some degree the character of God without recourse to revelation. A recent reference work in philosophy defines it as “the attempt to prove the existence of God, and sometimes human immortality too, from premises provided by observation of the ordinary course of nature.”⁴ The article goes on to distinguish this from revealed theology which concerns itself with “the contents and implications” of God’s revelation of Himself. Similarly, a recent theological dictionary states that natural theology is “traditionally that knowledge about God and the divine order which man’s reason can acquire without the aid of revelation.”⁵ The article attributes to this position the distinction between natural and revealed theology. It defines natural theology as “rational reflection on the question of divine existence.”⁶

Helm defines natural theology in this way:

By “natural theology” (or sometimes “rational theology”) is meant the procedure of establishing or making probable certain theological propositions about the existence and character of God, from premises of a non-theological character. Not only non-theological, however, but also premises the truth of which is acceptable to any (or almost any) rational man.⁷

A recent treatment differs slightly from these definitions. While the foregoing examples implicitly or explicitly contrast natural and revealed theology, Sproul, Gerstner, and Lindsley claim a compatibility between revelation and natural theology.

Simply stated, natural theology refers to knowledge of God acquired through nature. Classically, natural theology does not stand in contradiction to divine revelation nor does it exclude such revelation. In fact, natural theology is dependent upon divine revelation for its content.⁸

³For example, Gary Habermas, *The Resurrection of Jesus: An Apologetic* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980) 148–50; and R. C. Sproul, John Gerstner, and Arthur Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 25.

⁴Anthony Flew, ed., *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin’s, 1984) 241.

⁵Alan Richardson and John Bowden, ed., *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983) 393.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Paul Helm, *The Divine Revelation* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1982) 9.

⁸Sproul, Gerstner, Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics*, 25.

This is later restated: "Natural theology refers to a knowledge of God acquired from God's revelation of Himself in nature."⁹

If "revelation" in the earlier definitions of this second category is replaced with "special revelation" or "Scriptural revelation," the disparity disappears. Natural theology makes no use of Scripture, but it does insist that at least some of the aspects of reality indicate the existence and character of God.¹⁰

In this second meaning of natural theology, "natural" seems to refer to (1) the location of the revelation (the natural environment), and (2) the non-Scriptural character of this theological activity. It also seems to refer to (3) the natural condition of the human being apart from redemptive grace inasmuch as this grace of the Spirit is communicated only through the Word of God. While many natural theologians are regenerate, natural theology does not require the redemptive transformation of the practitioner. Natural theology, thus, is the elaboration of an entire theology by reason apart from revelation, or the establishment of the existence of the true God by reason, as natural revelation is studied without recourse to special revelation.

The second meaning of natural theology intends to establish for unbelievers the existence and, to some extent, the character of God from the unbeliever's perspective. Though the believer clearly affirms God and Scripture, for the purposes of the argument he puts that aside and works from the stance and the standards of the unbeliever. This type of natural theology involves no authoritative reference to or dependence upon the existence, character, *or activity* of God. To do so would be to work, not from the unbeliever's perspective, but from the believer's.

Common to both conceptions of natural theology is the refusal to use Scripture in the argumentation. In sharp contrast to this is a type of theistic argument which uses revelation as interpreted by Scripture. That is, using the Scriptural depiction of nature, an argument would present a view of the human race's environment to an unbeliever. This type of theistic argument is presented from the perspective of the believer as a representation of how he or she views the world. In Helm's words, this position asserts that

... the rational or natural "proofs" of God's existence are rational reconstructions based on the concept of God derived from the Christian Scriptures . . . If such a view could be sustained then presumably the function of the proofs would be to extend knowledge that God exists

⁹Ibid., 26.

¹⁰Ontological arguments perhaps are an exception to this dependence upon a revelatory reality.

to those either without the benefit of special revelation or who had rejected it.¹¹

This is an affirmation and use of natural revelation which is quite distinct from natural theology. It thus represents a creative alternative to the Barth-Brunner debate which seemed erroneously to assume that natural theology was the unavoidable consequence of an acknowledgment of a clear natural revelation.¹² There seems to be no reason to assume that God's self-disclosure in the created order is intended to be interpreted independently of God's verbal self-disclosure. On the contrary, the biblical pattern seems to be that "God's Word (whether oral or written) interprets God's world." This is true even in the Garden of Eden where holy humans in an unmarred environment "lived by every word that proceeded from the mouth of God." Whether this pattern holds true for the rest of Scripture is the subject of the next section of this paper. For now, it is sufficient to point out that natural revelation and natural theology are not necessarily correlative concepts (though, of course, they are not necessarily incompatible either). It is perfectly plausible to grant a disclosure by God in the creation and to deny that it is permissible to elaborate a theology, however limited in scope, by natural reason alone. Natural revelation and natural theology, after all, are performed by different agents: *God* reveals himself while *humans* theologize.

In short, God has disclosed himself in the created order (natural revelation), and he intends for his people to develop a theology of nature, i.e., a Scriptural perspective upon the created order, whether this takes the form of an ecological program of action or a theistic argument displaying God's existence and character to an unbeliever. However, the existence of this natural revelation does not imply that it is intended to be treated independently. Support for a natural theology must be sought elsewhere than in the doctrine of natural revelation.

ARE THERE BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF NATURAL THEOLOGY?

In addition to the assertion of the correlative relationship between natural revelation and natural theology, natural theology is defended on the grounds of its inclusion in the biblical record. Two accounts seem central: Paul and Barnabas at Lystra (Acts 14:8–18) and Paul at the Areopagus (Acts 17:16–34).

¹¹Helm, *Divine Revelation*, 12.

¹²Karl Barth's (and to a lesser extent Emil Brunner's) failure to distinguish the question of natural theology from the question of natural revelation is a prime reason for the frustrating nature of their dispute in *Natural Theology* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1946).

Lystra

At Lystra, Paul healed a man who had been listening to him preach the gospel. From this, the residents concluded that Paul and Barnabas were the Greek gods, Hermes and Zeus, and they prepared to sacrifice to them. The apostles rushed to prevent this sacrilege, explaining their true identity. Not gods but messengers of the living God, Paul and Barnabas had come to “preach the gospel” in order that these people might worship, not vain things, but the living God “Who made the heaven and the earth and sea and all that is in them” (v 15). This God was patient and long-suffering with the wickedness of men, having withheld judgment from them. Instead, he continually witnessed to them of his existence in doing good to them by giving rain and harvests which physically and emotionally filled them.

It seems clear from this passage that Paul and Barnabas are doing a theology of nature and not a natural theology. First, the background for their statements in vv 15–17 is their preaching of the gospel. They do not change their perspective in this next stage (note the verb *εὐαγγελιζόμενοι* in v 15). Second, a portion of their statement is a direct quotation from Exod 20:11. Moreover, they seem to be announcing unknown truths to these people. Rather than assuming a common epistemic stance, they differentiate between their knowledge and their audience’s lack of knowledge.

Though the passage does not rule out natural theology, it at least is unsupportive of it. Though the people of Lystra had lived their entire lives surrounded by God’s witness to himself by his generous gifts, they did not seem to have profited from it. In their *natural* condition, surrounded by God’s witness in the *natural* environment as viewed *naturally*, i.e., apart from Scripture, they did not affirm and worship the true God. They even misunderstood the sign-miracles and message of the servants of the true God. In their case, a truthful natural theology was not an obvious corollary of natural revelation.

Athens

Paul’s address to the Athenian philosophers in session at the Areopagus is probably the most often discussed apologetic incident in Scripture. For many, this passage is paradigmatic for apologetics in its use of natural theology.¹³ Accordingly, Paul attempted to establish the truth of Christianity by starting from propositions affirmed by the Athenian philosophers. These propositions included some drawn from observation of the natural order. These Athenians had already begun the elaboration of a truthful natural theology. Paul’s goal was

¹³See e.g., Habermas, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 13, 170–71.

to lead them on further in that task and then to connect this theology with the historical message of the Gospel. Inasmuch as the Athenians did not know or accept Scripture, Paul omitted reference to it, using instead Greek philosophy, the natural order, and history.

This is a common interpretation of this passage in support of natural theology, but it is erroneous.¹⁴ The address summarized in Acts 17:22–31 was not the beginning of Paul's activity in Athens. Rather, it was an explanatory speech in response to queries by those who heard Paul “reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be present” (v 17). Paul sought not to introduce the truth to these men, but rather to explain that to which they had already been introduced. It would seem to follow that his method has not changed from the earlier to the later discussions. The earlier reasoning was apparently a typical Pauline advocacy of the Gospel to idolators (see, e.g., 1 Thess 1:2–10). The later explanation would not need a change in epistemic warrant (i.e., natural reason instead of Scripture).

Paul selected an inscription from one of Athens's many altars as the topical point of contact. “While I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you” (v 23). Paul had already described his audience as δεισιδαιμονεστέρους (v 22). The word can mean either “very religious” or “very superstitious” depending upon the context; perhaps Paul was intentionally ambiguous or ironic. The Athenians had manifested their ardent religiosity (which in fact amounted to no more than superstition) by including among their many altars one which was dedicated to “the Unknown God.” This was apparently to prevent an omission due to oversight or ignorance. Paul took this as an admission of at least partial ignorance or uncertainty and addressed this need. He announced his intention to

¹⁴See the extensive literature on this passage including F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* (New International Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954) 348–65; *idem*, *The Defense of the Gospel in the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 39–49; *idem*, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 235–47; Bertil Gartner, *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation* (Uppsala: C. W. Gleerup, 1955); I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 281–91; H. P. Owen, *NTS* 5 (1958–59) 133–43; Ned B. Stonehouse, *Paul before the Areopagus* (London: Tyndale, 1951). For a somewhat different view, see Stephen G. Wilson, *The Gentiles and the Gentile Mission in Luke-Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1973) 196–218, and also C. K. Barrett, “Paul's Speech on the Areopagus” in *New Testament Christianity For Africa and the World*, ed. M. E. Glasswell and E. W. Fashole-Luke (London: SPCK, 1974) 69–77.

proclaim ($\kappaαταγγέλλω$) to them that which they worshiped in ignorance. The apostle made a sharp distinction between his audience and himself. They were in ignorance while he was in the truth. What they needed he intended to deliver to them. Epistemic divergence, rather than commonality, seemed to be Paul's point. "Proclaim" is an unlikely word for a natural theology term; other phrasing would be expected to indicate the *commonality* of the project to *establish* or *verify* the issue under discussion.¹⁵

The point of contact that Paul chose became the theme of his remarks. The entire address as recorded by Luke developed the character of the true God. First, Paul described him as the Creator who was greater than man-made objects and, as self-sufficient, the source of life for all creation. He continued by noting the solidarity of the human race which God made, his sovereignty over human affairs, and his status as the true object of humanity's worship, to all of whom he was accessible because they lived by means of him. Yet this true object of worship was not a man-made idol, but rather was the exemplar whom man imaged. Finally, Paul announced that this God was patient, having withheld judgment thus far, but was calling for repentance before the day of judgment by Christ, whose uniqueness had been demonstrated by the resurrection.

Paul did not build primarily upon common affirmations, leading the Athenians gradually to a Christian profession as a natural out-growth of their present beliefs. He seemed rather to be setting Christianity in fundamental opposition to their present beliefs (which of course does not imply that they knew *no* true religious propositions nor that Paul had *no* common affirmations with them). The first instance of this was the introduction which contrasted ignorance with knowledge. This was followed by the doctrine of creation in opposition to the eternity of matter and the world and to the distinction between the supreme being and the anthropomorphic deities involved in earth history. The true God did not dwell in temples, but Athens was full of shrines for numerous gods. Paul's God had no need of human help in contrast to the gods of the Greek religions.

While Greeks in general and Athenians in particular were elitists, claiming supremacy because of their appeal (in the case of Athens) to unique origins by divine action, Paul proclaimed the unity of the human race. Reversing the pattern of the Greek anthropomorphic gods, Paul proclaimed a humanity in the image of God.

¹⁵"Proclaim" seems more indicative of evangelism or preaching than of apologetics, at least as typically conceived. I have wondered in recent years whether *any* school of apologetical thought can use this account as a paradigmatic defense of the faith. Perhaps this should rather be described as "evangelistic theologizing."

In the context of these statements about humanity's relationship to God, Paul quoted at least one pagan author and perhaps a second.¹⁶ He himself identified one of these quotations pointing out a parallel to his assertions in the poet Aratus. Earlier in v 28, the phrase, "in him we live and move and exist" has been attributed to Epimenides the Cretan. Even these quotations did not reflect a common stance or perspective between Paul and his audience. Paul was accusing the Athenians of failing to be consistent with their own statements and was giving new meaning even to these statements. As Bruce says,

It is not suggested that even Paul of Acts (let alone the Paul whom we know from his letters) envisaged God in terms of the Zeus of Stoic pantheism, but if men whom his hearers recognized as authorities had used language which could corroborate his argument, he would quote their words, giving them a biblical sense as he did so.¹⁷

Moreover, the quotations pertain only to a subordinate point of the address which argues against the view that Paul built his entire sermon on common beliefs.

Paul concluded by warning that God's forebearance would soon end, followed by a day of judgment through a man who had been set apart from the rest of humanity by a special act of God's power, the resurrection from the dead. All of this was surely in opposition to the affirmations of the Greeks.

There is another indication of the biblical rather than natural basis of Paul's address, i.e., the echoes of OT language.¹⁸ God as "the maker of heaven and earth" is a familiar refrain in the OT; God's non-inhabitation of man-made shrines was asserted by Solomon (1 Kgs 8:27) and, perhaps more significantly for Paul, by Stephen (Acts 7:48–50). Ps 50:9–12 records the irrelevance of human provision for God. According to Deut 32:8, God established the bounds of the peoples. Man as the image of God and the condemnation of idolatry both have obvious parallels in the Hebrew Scriptures. So too does the call for repentance in view of the coming day of judgment.

The conclusion is that Paul was summarizing biblical theology (though omitting textual or authorial citations) and setting it over against the views espoused by the Areopagites. This was his way of explaining the message which he had been arguing in the synagogue and the market place. The Areopagus address, therefore, does not

¹⁶See Bruce, *Paul*, 241–42; *idem*, *The Book of Acts*, 359–60, but see Gartner, *The Areopagus Speech*, 195.

¹⁷Bruce, *Paul*, 242. See also Gartner, *The Areopagus Speech*, 192–95, and Stonehouse, *Paul before the Areopagus*, 37.

¹⁸Bruce, *Paul*, 238–42; see also Gartner, *The Areopagus Speech*, 167–69.

support natural theology (although, again, it does not rule it out either).

DOES SCRIPTURE AUTHORIZE NATURAL THEOLOGY?

It seems that there are no biblical examples of natural theology; at least the two frequently cited passages do not qualify as natural theology. However, this alone does not preclude natural theology. After all, many things not exemplified in Scripture are nonetheless legitimate for Christians (e.g., heart transplants, vending machines, airplanes). Accordingly, the advocates of natural theology have identified biblical teachings which authorize natural theology.

In Its Teaching Concerning the Created Reality

Nature Psalms

One group of passages cited for support speak of the revelation of God by that which he made, sustains, and governs. For example, the nature Psalms (e.g., 8, 19, 29, 65, 104) are said to so emphasize the abundant and clear indications of God's activity that the human observer is made aware of him. This is true whether the person is a believer or an unbeliever, whether with or without the Scriptures.

This phenomenon in the created order and the descriptions of it in the Psalms do not provide a basis for natural theology. The Psalms are set in the midst of the people of God. They are the utterances of God's redeemed people based upon their experiences. The psalmists surely are not unredeemed people nor are they believers who bracket their faith in order to discourse with the unredeemed. The psalmists seem always to be looking at life in light of their identity as children of God.¹⁹ God is always in the picture, even when he seems unresponsive or distant. Life (whether joyous or sorrowful), God, and the redeemed seem to be a part of every psalm.

Another element seems to be latent in this picture, i.e., the Scriptures. God's Word as the account of God's deeds in history and the created order must be seen as the foundation of the life and perspective of the child of God. It nourishes him, encourages him, corrects him, and illuminates his pathways. The law or statutes of the Lord are never far from the psalmist's thought. This suggests that the psalmists would find natural theology incompatible. The psalmists surely have a theology of nature and just as surely believe in natural revelation; but they do not seem to do natural theology.

¹⁹See the acknowledgment of this possibility by Bruce Demarest, *General Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982) 237.

As argued above, the presence of natural revelation does not involve natural theology as a corollary. However clear may be God's self-disclosure through his creation, how human beings can and do respond to it is a distinct question, not resolvable by inference solely from the presence of the revelation in nature.

Romans 1

The previous point is central to the other scriptural passage frequently used by advocates of natural theology. Romans 1 addresses both God's self-disclosure in creation and also humanity's response.²⁰ Two phrases indicate the revelation of God: "that which is known about God is evident within them" (v 19); "His invisible attributes, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made" (v 20).²¹

Paul deals more extensively with the human response to this clearly seen manifestation of God. He describes it in two ways. First, he asserts the knowledge of God which humans have because of this revelation: they "suppress the truth" (v 18) which requires that they have apprehended it, they "understood" and "clearly perceived" the revelation (v 20), they "know God" (v 21), and they "knew" the judgment of God (v 32).

Second, Paul characterizes humanity as not knowing God: "they become futile in their speculations, . . . their foolish heart was darkened" (v 21), "they become fools" (v 22), "they exchanged the truth of God for a lie" (v 25), "they did not approve of having God in their knowledge" (v 28), "God gave them over to a depraved mind" (v 29), and they are "without understanding" (v 31). Here the relevance of an examination of the meaning and interrelationship of believing and knowing is clear. The problem is more complex than whether or not unbelievers can or do "know God" or "know that there is a God."

²⁰See C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary On the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975, 1979) 1, 104–35; C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957) 31–41; John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959, 1965) 34–53; Ernst Kasemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 33–52; Emil Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans* (London: Lutterworth, 1959) 16–19; Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (London: SCM, 1952) 98–113. For some suggested correlations between Romans 1 and the Fall narrative in Genesis, see D. J. W. Milne, "Genesis 3 in the Letter to the Romans," *The Reformed Theological Review* 39:1 (Jan.–April 1980) 10–18.

²¹I am less concerned here with the precise locus of this "manifestation" which is "clearly seen" than with its reality (though I am inclined to concur with Beck's criticisms of Demarest's consideration of this passage as teaching an "effable intuition" which cannot be structured into a discursive demonstration. W. David Beck, review of Bruce Demarest, *General Revelation* in *JETS* 26:4 (December 1983) 462–64.

These phrases clearly establish that unbelievers are not unaware of the true and living God. The issue is rather what kind of knowledge of God they have.

A neglected aspect of this discussion is that there are different forms of knowledge. Scripture does not evidence a monolithic conception of knowledge, but rather uses the concept in a variety of senses (several of which overlap the different senses of belief). For this reason, Demarest's criticism of "persuasive definitions" in Kuyper, Berkouwer, and Van Til²² is inadequate (though it must be admitted that the distinctions were not clearly set forth by these men). Demarest's distinction between knowledge of God as Creator and knowledge of God as Redeemer not only inaccurately portrays Calvin's position,²³ it also fails as a Scriptural clarification of the admittedly ambiguous phrases, "true knowledge" or "pure knowledge," used by these theologians.

The difficulty lies, at least in part, in Demarest's understanding of Romans 1 as portraying a straightforward progression. He summarizes his view with "three important assertions": "Mankind properly perceives truth about God from nature (vv 19–21),"²⁴ "knowledge of God is mediated by natural revelation (v 20),"²⁵ and "man consistently suppresses all forms of general revelation (vv 21–32)."²⁶ This last assertion is amplified in three more statements. "Mankind uniformly repudiates the knowledge of God afforded by general revelation (Rom 1:21–22, 28a)."²⁷ "Man not only spurned the knowledge of God but he proceeds to fashion lifeless gods in the form of men, birds, animals, and reptiles (vv 23, 25). . . . That is, as a consequence of man's sinful rebellion, the light of knowledge of God becomes for him utter darkness."²⁸ Third, "God, because of man's willful rejection of the light, gave mankind up to their own inventions (vv 24, 26–32)."²⁹ Demarest apparently sees a progression: knowledge, rejection of knowledge, judicially imposed non-knowledge. Darkness replaces the rejected light.

It is more accurate to see a significant degree of epistemic simultaneity in Romans 1 (though progression surely is not entirely

²²Demarest, *General Revelation*, 139–40, 147.

²³For Demarest, knowledge of God as Creator is possible through general revelation alone while knowledge of God as Redeemer requires special revelation. For Calvin, the "spectacles of Scripture" are necessary for both types of knowledge. See his *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I, 6, i.

²⁴Demarest, *General Revelation*, 238.

²⁵Ibid., 239.

²⁶Ibid., 241.

²⁷Ibid., 244.

²⁸Ibid., 245.

²⁹Ibid., 245.

absent). Both knowledge and non-knowledge coexist in unregenerate human beings.³⁰ The only alternatives to this seem to be a “history of humanity” perspective wherein humankind as a whole goes through the stages (in which case any particular human being only experiences part of the progression) or an individual perspective in which every human being starts fresh with God and goes through each stage himself (but this too strongly resembles a Pelagian-like individualism). According to a simultaneous view, each human being, having been represented in Adam, is born in the condition of depravity and the relationship of spiritual death. Nonetheless, he cannot avoid knowing true propositions about God as well as being personally acquainted with God as the One who is wrathful towards him.³¹ Yet even while aware of God, he distorts and ignores and suppresses and disobeys this knowledge—all of which involve a form of “non-knowledge.” The unregenerate is always in a relationship with God (and is thus “acquainted” with him); he is almost always aware of him (i.e., aware of true propositions about him); yet he never loves him (an important sense of knowledge in Scripture), seldom obeys him (another important sense of knowledge); and always affirms some false propositions about God. In short, every unregenerate seems always characterized both by knowledge of God and also by non-knowledge of him.³² It is this differentiated conception of knowledge which Kuyper, Berkouwer, and Van Til apparently have in mind by their “persuasive definitions.” They surely do not intend to deny that unregenerate humans are aware of God, but they just as surely do not consider them to have knowledge of him involving “reverence, faith, submission, and fidelity” (which Demarest says are involved in the Hebrew perspective of “true knowledge”).³³

Perhaps this is the crux of the dispute. Natural theologians find both in Scripture and in experience that unregenerate human beings are aware of the existence and character of God even apart from Scripture and hence conclude that natural theology is legitimate.³⁴ Others, however, find that this awareness if not unqualified, that it only constitutes one (lower) form of knowledge according to Scrip-

³⁰ See Gunther Bornkamm, “The Revelation of God’s Wrath: Romans 1–3” in his *Early Christian Experience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969) 53–69, and “Faith and Reason in Paul,” *ibid.*, 33–35.

³¹ Demarest’s limitation of the unregenerate’s knowledge of God to knowledge about God while salvation introduces personal knowledge of God is inadequate.

³² See John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1987) 58–59.

³³ Demarest, *General Revelation*, 247. Demarest affirms this (persuasively defined?) “true knowledge” only of believers.

³⁴ Sproul, Gerstner, and Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics*, 62–63.

ture, and, even so, that it does not lead to a loving and submissive response to God. Consequently, they consider natural theology—as a conscious, programmatic, and “open-minded” epistemic project—an impossibility.³⁵ No unregenerate can start from scratch in an attempt to establish whether or not a god of such and such a character exists. Every human being already is aware of the true God and already has responded disobediently and dishonestly to this awareness. This is not to say that argument with unregenerates is futile (Scripture clearly supports the legitimacy of “reasoning,” “disputing,” “persuading,” etc.); only that argument with them which assumes unawareness of God and neutrality or open-mindedness toward Him is erroneous.

In Its Teaching Concerning Unregenerate Humans and Apologetics

Here the line is crossed from merely the lack of scriptural support for natural theology to the biblical illegitimacy of natural theology. Unregenerates, inescapably aware of God and continually rebellious against God, cannot be *introduced* to God. Conversion is an introduction only to a *new level or type* of knowledge of God. Unregenerates are “knowledgeable suppressors of truth”; as such they need a deepening *and* a purifying of their knowledge of God. It is too late to *introduce* the awareness of God, and it is too optimistic to regard them simply as “accurate yet partial” knowers of God. Their present knowledge needs not merely additions but also corrections. Neither the additions nor the corrections will be received with open arms. This new information about God will be no more hospitably treated than was the previous information. Natural theology seems at times to overestimate the reception both of the previously acquired knowledge of God as well as of that knowledge which it contributes. The stance of the unbeliever is not merely *outside* of the Kingdom of God, but also *against* the Kingdom. He/she is not a spectator, but an opponent. This is not to deny that unregenerates can be “open and receptive” to the Gospel by the ministry of the Spirit, but only to affirm that even then, being convicted and drawn by the Spirit, they are not neutral and devoid of an awareness of God. In short, natural theology is illegitimate because of its overestimation of the unbeliever’s condition (particularly epistemically).³⁶

Another reason that natural theology is an illegitimate method of apologetics is that Scripture, in its use of the terms ἀπολογία and ἀπολογέομαι in the NT and in its accounts of apologetic encounters,

³⁵The Sproul *et al.* conclusion is too minimalistic a definition. For them, natural theology occurs prior to the evangelistic/apologetic encounter. Yet the term generally seems to be used to also include an activity that is part of the encounter.

³⁶For further discussion of this, see my “Common Ground,” 4–7.

always represents apologetics as the defense of the true faith by one who already believes it from a stance in this faith and in opposition (though meekly) to unbelief. Whether it be Moses before Pharaoh or Elijah on Mt. Carmel or Jesus or Peter before the Jewish leaders or Paul before Gentiles, apologists in Scripture always work from an explicit stance in the faith as known through God's word-deed revelation. Even before Gentiles, as argued above, Paul never "lays aside Scripture" to work from the stance and values of unbelievers. Yet this is what natural theology seems most predominantly to advocate. The premise that a meaningful disputation can only occur if common epistemic standards and perspectives are used needs reconsideration. All that is needed is a common topic of concern, a common identity as humans imaging God (however ethically antithetical that imaging may be) and a common ontic environment. Scripture as God's normative disclosure provides the content and the perspective for biblical apologetics even though one party in the dispute does not accept its authority.

CONCLUSION

Both of natural theology's fundamental premises—that unbelievers are more likely to be responsive to presentations of theism or Christianity if presented on their own terms, and that the apologetic encounter requires a common epistemic foundation—conflict with Scripture. The possible greater response is not worth the adoption of an improper method. Moreover, the ontic and topical common ground is sufficient to permit rational disputation. Therefore, Scripture has neither the example of nor the warrant for natural theology. Although both a theology of nature and natural revelation are biblical, natural theology is not.

THE ASCENSION MOTIF OF 2 CORINTHIANS 12 IN JEWISH, CHRISTIAN AND GNOSTIC TEXTS

BRAD H. YOUNG

The heavenly ascent motif is common in religious documents of late antiquity. A preoccupation with the similarities between these accounts leads some to overlook the equally important differences. Care should be taken, however, to distinguish between mystical esotericism and extraordinary religious encounter.

Earlier Jewish traditions provide the proper context for understanding Paul's visions and revelations; certain Gnostic texts evidence yet another distinct stage of development in the ascension motif. But thematic parallels do not warrant the assumption that various religious traditions are basically identical in origins. And parallels should not lead to indiscriminate grouping of essentially unrelated texts.

* * *

THE motif of the ascension through the celestial spheres provides many insights into the religious thought of various traditions and sects in late antiquity. Here the primary texts for examination are: Paul's experience in 2 Cor 12:1–10, selected rabbinic narratives, the *Ascension of Isaiah* and the Nag Hammadi *Apocalypse of Paul*. Before turning to the textual examination, a few preliminary observations must be made in view of the great methodological problems presented by this theme. At the outset, it must be noted that the ascension motif is not uniquely Jewish or distinctively Gnostic. Neither does Paul's description in 2 Corinthians make it an exclusively Christian motif. In fact, the heavenly ascent is very widespread and appears in many religious contexts. In some of the ascent descriptions, it is difficult to determine if a literal heavenly journey is taking place or if a vision is being described. Sometimes, it is not clear whether an author is relating a specific revelation or if he is explaining the geography of the unknown celestial spheres. Other questions are related to these problems. Is the soul or the body

ascending? Is the ascent induced or does a heavenly messenger appear to initiate the experience unsolicited? When does the journey occur? How is it connected to death? Does the ascent begin after death or is it a mystical experience?¹

The heavenly ascent theme seems to be the common property of the ancient world. One finds it in the so-called "Mithraic Liturgy."² It appears in Jewish pseudepigraphic-apocalyptic literature,³ in Hermetic texts like *Poimandres*,⁴ in the Nag Hammadi codices,⁵ and also in

¹Some of these problems are discussed in a Seminar Paper which the writer received through the courtesy of M. Stone, see, *Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins*, "Heavenly Ascent in Graeco Roman Piety," meeting of October 18, 1977 at 7:00 p.m. in Williams Hall, University of Pennsylvania. The classic treatment of the theme appears in W. Bousset, "Die Himmelsreise der Seele," *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 4 (1901) 136–69. Recently a number of studies have appeared which treat these questions. See especially A. F. Segal, "Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity and their Environment," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, II.23.2 (1980) 1333–94. M. Dean-Otting's thesis has been published, *Heavenly Journeys: A Study of the Motif in Hellenistic Jewish Literature* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1984). However Dean-Otting did not include what was defined as Christian texts and thus unfortunately the *Ascension of Isaiah* was excluded (cf. also M. Himmelfarb's review, *JBL* 106 [1987] 126–28). See also Hans-Josef Klauck, "Die Himmelfahrt des Paulus (2 Kor 12,2–4) in der koptischen Paulusapokalypse aus Nag Hammadi (NHC V/2)" *Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt* 10 (1985) 151–53, where he discusses some of the various components of the ascension theme. J. Tabor has proposed four types of heavenly ascent, "(1) Ascent as an invasion of heaven (2) Ascent to receive revelation (3) Ascent to heavenly immortality (4) Ascent as a foretaste of the heavenly world," *idem*, *Things Unutterable Paul's Ascent to Paradise in its Greco-Roman, Judaic, and Early Christian Contexts* (New York: Lanham Books, 1986) 69. Nonetheless extreme caution must be exercised. Even as a heuristic device, categorization of this theme can be misleading because the ancient writer may employ a combination of these familiar elements as he works to achieve his purpose.

²Franz Cumont, *The Mysteries of Mithra* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956) 130–36. See the new translation, M. W. Meyer, *The "Mithras Liturgy"* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976).

³See, e.g., 1 Enoch 14:1–15:4, and cf. Enoch's journeys in chapters 17 through 36; chapter 70; 2 Enoch 1–22 and the Testament of Levi 2:6ff. (J. H. Charlesworth, ed. *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. [New York, 1983–85] has made these texts more accessible; see also the recent critical edition of Enoch by M. Black, *The Book of Enoch* [Leiden, 1985]; and on the heavens in the Testament of the Levi, see H. W. Hollander and M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* [Leiden, 1985] 134, as well as n. 18 below). A. Segal's work (*op. cit. n. 1*) is especially helpful and he has also called attention to Philo of Alexandria (*idem*, 1354ff.). See also the works on the ascension theme cited in n. 1 above.

⁴Cf. R. Reitzenstein, *Poimandres: Studien zur griechisch-ägyptischen und frühchristlichen Literatur* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1966, reprint of 1904 edition). As has often been noted, the English edition published by Walter Scott and A. S. Ferguson in the first volume of their *Hermetica* (Oxford, 1924–1936, four volumes) suffers from the editors' somewhat free emendation of the text. See also R. M. Grant, *Gnosticism* (New York: AMS Press, 1978) 211ff., and B. Layton's new translation and annotations, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (New York: Doubleday, 1987).

New Testament Apocryphal texts like the Christian *Apocalypse of Paul*⁶ as well as in the New Testament itself.⁷ One also finds direct and indirect references to it in both rabbinic literature and in mystical Jewish texts.⁸ In fact, these texts only begin to illustrate the great amount of literature that is associated with this motif. The inherent dangers of comparative study are manifest: how, if at all, are these

449ff. Cf. also H. Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston, 1963) 165–73; Tabor, *Things Unutterable*, 66; and Segal, “Heavenly Ascent,” 1379–81. For a discussion of some of the questions raised by Reitzenstein’s conclusions and especially his proposal concerning a pre-Christian redeemer myth, cf. also C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1953) 10–53; A. Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (London, 1953) 26–29; C. H. Talbert, “The Myth of a Descending-Ascending Redeemer in Mediterranean Antiquity,” *New Testament Studies* 22 (1976) 418–39; C. Colpe, *Die Religionsgeschichtliche Schule: Darstellung und Kritik ihres Bildes vom gnostischen Erlösermythus* (1961) 16f.; and E. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983, revised edition) 69–83, 244–45. See also, E. Yamauchi, “Hermetic Literature,” *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, Supplementary Volume, 408 and C. H. Dodd, “Hellenistic Judaism and the Hermetica,” *The Bible and the Greeks* (London, 1935, reprint 1964), part 2, 97–248. Grant observes, “The most obvious explanation of the origin of the Gnostic redeemer is that he was modelled after the Christian conception of Jesus. It seems significant that we know no redeemer before Jesus, while we encounter other redeemers (Simon Magus, Menander) immediately after his time” (*ibid.*, 18).

⁵In addition to the Nag Hammadi *Apocalypse of Paul* discussed here, see also e.g., *The Gospel of Truth* I.3.21–22; *The Apocryphon of John* II.1.20; *The Apocryphon of James* I.2.10–15; *The Tripartite Tractate* I.5.123; *On the Origin of the World* II.5.116, 127; *The Exegesis on the Soul* II.6.134. Cf. also the discussion of “Nag Hammadi” in the *Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins* and the work of Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: the Nature and History of Gnosticism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987) 171–203.

⁶E.g., *The Apocalypse of Paul* 11ff., cf. H. Duensing’s edition, in E. Hennecke and J. W. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha* (London: SCM, 1974), 2:763ff. See also n. 10 below.

⁷2 Corinthians 12:1–10. See also V. Furnish, *II Corinthians* (New York: Doubleday, 1984) 523–32.

⁸Cf. b. Chagigah 14b (parallels to s. Chag. 2.1; j. Chag. 77b, Chap. 2, hal. 1) and see E. E. Urbach, “Hamassorot Al Torat Hasod Betekufat Hatannaim,” *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to G. Scholem* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967) 7 n. 25 where he notes the texts from s. Megilah 3 (4):28 (Leiberman’s edition, 361–62) and the parallel in b. Megilah 24b, “They said to R. Judah: Many have discerned sufficiently [with their mind’s eye] to expound the Chariot, and yet they never saw it” (אמרו לו לרבי יהודה הרבה צפו לדורש במרכבה ולא ראו אותה מימה). Some of the methodological problems of comparative study have been outlined by P. Alexander, “Comparing Merkavah Mysticism and Gnosticism: an Essay in Method,” *JJS* 25 (1984) 1–18, and for a summary of the research, see Yehuda Liebes, *The Sin of Elisha: the Four who Entered Paradise and the Nature of Talmudic Mysticism* (Hebrew University Monograph Series, 1986) 3–33 (Hebrew). See also I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1980) 29–72; he discusses *Ascensione Isaiae* on pp. 57–62; cf. G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, revised edition, 1965); *Ma’aseh Merkabah and Hekhaloth Rabbati*; For editions see

exemplary texts related and what are the differences between them. Nevertheless it is certainly a grave error to minimize the importance of the differences in an effort to prove that all religious traditions of late antiquity are similar or basically identical.⁹ The differences may appear insignificant to a modern outsider, but to insiders, i.e. those initiated in cultic practice and belief, subtle distinctions were often decisive.

It should be noted, however, that the idea of the heavenly ascent carries a considerable weight of importance within the framework of Gnostic religious thought. For instance, the Nag Hammadi *Gospel of Truth* teaches, "Since perfection of all is in the Father, it is necessary for the all to ascend to him" (I, 3.21.20).¹⁰ While it may not be clear when the ascent will occur, it does appear that all will be required to ascend. In other words, the ascent is unavoidable. As Grant has shown, the soul's ascent may be understood in some contexts as the spirit's escape from evil matter.¹¹ No doubt the Gnostic believer viewed his ascent through the celestial spheres as his journey to the highest degree of perfection. This ascent through the hostile celestial

S. Wertheimer, *Batei Midrashot* (Jerusalem: Ktav Vasefer, 1980); A. Jellinek, *Beit Hamidrash* (Jerusalem: Bamberger and Wahrmann, 1938); S. Mosaiov, *Merkavah Shelemah* (Jerusalem: Makor, 1972); Rachel Elior, "Hekhalot Zutarti," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, Supplement 1 (1982), based upon Jewish Theological Seminary manuscript 8128; and especially the important work of P. Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1981). The present study will show that careful research of specific texts is the best way to approach these questions.

⁹ Pace Tabor, *Things Unutterable*, 4ff.; Tabor claims, "Jacob Neusner has repeatedly documented similar attempts to mark off periods or figures or sources belonging to a 'pure' past (conceived in various ways) by scholars working in the area of Judaism in late antiquity. This essentially 'fundamentalist' tendency is encountered often in the history of the 'history' of religions." Tabor continues, "The perennial 'Hellenistic vs. Judaic' debate will not appear [in Tabor's book], since I am convinced that emerging Christianity and the other forms of Second Temple Judaism are, by definition, 'Hellenistic' (strictly, Roman imperial) religions, essentially similar to the other religions of the period" (*ibid*). On the contrary, a tendentious blending together of all religious traditions because of some similarities and by ignoring the limitations of time, historical figures and careful analysis of literary sources as well as the distinctive characteristics of each tradition will certainly lead to questionable results. Objective historical analysis requires consideration of these factors in order to understand and to interpret early religious texts within their original cultural milieu.

¹⁰ Compare also the *Epistula Apostolorum*, 20–21, prepared by H. Duensing, in E. Hennecke and J. W. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1:205. In addition, cf. J. Doresse, *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics* (Vermont, 1986) 146–248, who deals with the tractates individually as he comments upon the tenants of gnostic beliefs.

¹¹ R. M. Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959) 61.

regions was considered dangerous and special knowledge or a guide was needed to make the trip successfully. Some systems emphasized the need for this knowledge and increased the number of spheres that the traveler must pass. Basilides, for example, maintained that there were three hundred and fifty six heavens.¹²

Whether this ascent happens at death is not always clear. At least, the Christian *Apocalypse of Paul* provides a parallel that could be related to the Gnostic idea. At death, when a soul passes from its body, wicked angels and holy angels are waiting to meet it. On the one hand, the evil angels take the sinner's soul to the place of torment and on the other hand, the holy angels escort the righteous one's soul through the perilous heavenly spheres to paradise.¹³

How did the ascension theme develop? Any attempt to try to trace its genesis back to a single origin is unsatisfactory. The widespread use of the motif makes it difficult to show that influence comes from one source. This phenomenon did not arise in a vacuum. It appears to be the product of a combination of themes that were circulating within a common religious environment. At this point, any identification of this mutual religious environment and its relationship to Gnosticism is premature. Rather than trying to isolate a specific sphere of influence, it is more productive to view elements within specific texts and to understand their relationship to each other. Here after a careful textual examination, different stages of development will become clear. On the one hand the scholar must take care not to group unrelated texts together, but at the same time he must carefully consider parallel themes and the connections between them.

PAUL'S VISIONS AND MERKABAH MYSTICISM

That Paul had polemical motives in mind when writing 2 Corinthians has often been noted. Apparently he was polemicizing with a group of super-pneumatics and wanted to say that he had also received numerous visions and revelations. As reported in the account

¹²See Irenaeus, *adv. haer.* I, 24:3 and cf. J. Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (London: The Westminster Press, 1964) 75.

¹³The *Apocalypse of Paul* 14–17; in E. Hennecke and J. W. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2:766ff. Cf. with the Testament of Job 52:1ff., S. P. Brock, *Testamentum Iobi* (Leiden: Brill, 1967) 58, and the new English translation by R. P. Spittler in J. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:867. (David Flusser called my attention to the Testament of Job.) Compare also the Coptic texts discussed in J. Zandee, *Death as an Enemy* (New York: Arno, 1977) 328–36, and on the Greek conception of death, cf. R. Garland, *The Greek View of Death* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1980).

of Acts, and it seems that this work is closely connected to Paul himself, Paul had at least eight visions.¹⁴ Bowker has argued that these experiences of Paul may very well somehow be related to Paul's training in merkabah contemplation.¹⁵ Perhaps Scholem has been the most prominent advocate for claiming that Paul's experience as described in 2 Cor 12:1–10 is a description of early merkabah mysticism, "It is obvious that Paul, who wrote these lines about the year 58 C.E., was speaking of an idea with which his readers were familiar, a Jewish conception that he as well as his readers in Corinth, had brought over into the new Christian community."¹⁶

Recently Schäfer has challenged Scholem's approach and a number of scholars may question whether the story of the four who entered into the סְדָרֶךְ as recorded in talmudic literature should be discussed in the context of the ascension motif.¹⁷ The controversy surrounds the rabbinic tradition concerning the four sages who entered into the סְדָרֶךְ and Paul's ascent (literally being caught up) into the third heaven where he was in "Paradise" (ἡρπάγη εἰς τὸν παρά-

¹⁴ J. Bowker, "'Merkabah' Visions and the Visions of Paul," *JSS* 16 (1971) 159 n. 2. Here are some of Paul's visions recorded in Acts and his epistles: his Damascus road experience (Acts 9:3–6, 26:12–18); his vision of Ananias (Acts 9:12); the appearance of the Macedonian man after which Paul responds by immediately trying to travel to Macedonia (Acts 16:9–10); the vision of encouragement in Corinth (Acts 18:9–10); his experience in the Temple where apparently Paul was in ecstasy or some kind of trance-like state ($\gamma\epsilon\nu\epsilon\theta\omega\mu\epsilon\ \acute{e}n\ \acute{\epsilon}\kappa\sigma\tau\acute{a}\sigma\epsilon\iota$, Acts 22:17–21; and compare the language used to describe Peter's vision, Acts 11:5; see n. 29 below); the night vision after his appearance before the council (Acts 23:11); the angel who appeared to him before his shipwreck (Acts 27:23–24); and of course 2 Cor 12:1–10. It should also be noted that Paul speaks of the gospel he preached as being derived through revelation (Gal 1:12) and that he took time to sojourn in Arabia apparently for contemplation (Gal 1:17).

¹⁵ Ibid. David E. Aune has observed that 2 Cor 12:9 forms an oracular response which has parallels both in Greco-Roman sources as well as in the prophetic narratives of the Old Testament and in the ancient near eastern literature. He understands the passage in 2 Cor 12:1–10 as describing two different experiences. Here I have suggested that the continuation of the passage (2 Cor 12:7–10) is a further description of his ascent (vv 1–6). Although Aune notes the form of a *Heilsorakel* giving the apostle assurance, Aune believes that the description is probably an *actual experience* rather than a mere parable which is used for Paul's purpose (see Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983] 249–50).

¹⁶ G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: The Jewish Seminary of America, 1965) 17. It seems that Scholem probably was too quick to make a connection between early Christianity and Jewish mystical texts especially when he proposes that merkabah mysticism was well known among the Corinthian congregation.

¹⁷ P. Schäfer, "New Testament and Hekhalot Literature: The Journey into Heaven in Paul and in Merkavah Mysticism," *JJS* 35 (1984) 32ff. While the present author has difficulties with Scholem (see preceding note), Schäfer's approach seems to lead too far in the other direction.

δεισον).¹⁸ Schäfer has suggested that originally the story about the four sages was probably “meant to demonstrate four different types of Torah teachers and, by way of the type represented by Akiba, to show the desirable model.”¹⁹ He bases this interpretation primarily on the reading of the Tosefta which records that R. Akiva “entered and came out” instead of the terminology that would betray a mystical tendency, namely that he ascended and descended.²⁰

¹⁸Ibid., 25–26 and 32. The meaning of the word פֶּרֶג in the story of the four sages and the word παράδεισος in 2 Corinthians will continue to be a controversial question. The word פֶּרֶג only appears three times in the Old Testament (Cant 4:13, Neh 2:8 and Eccl 2:5). In rabbinic literature a פֶּרֶג may be nothing more than a garden or an orchard. The Hebrew word seems to be derived from the Avestan *pairidaēza*, and is a loanword from old Persian, *pairi-dāza-* (read *pari-daiza-* or *-dēza-*) which originally meant “beyond the wall,” and hence an enclosure, a pleasant retreat or park. See also L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*, 776, and especially J. Jeremias’ treatment in *TDNT*, 5:765–73. In addition, cf. Tabor, *Things Unutterable*, 115–21. Tabor carefully deals with the materials in parallel sources but wrongly suggests that Paul describes a two stage journey in 2 Corinthians 12 in which the third heaven was a station on the way to paradise. However his suggestion makes little sense from the context of Paul’s epistle where the third heaven is best understood as being parallel to the term παράδεισος. The question has been entertained by Klauck who suggests, “Der dritte Himmel ist zugleich der höchste Himmel. ‘Paradies’ sagt nur etwas mehr über seine besondere Qualität aus,” Klauck, “Die Himmelfahrt des Paulus (2 Kor 12,2–4) in der koptischen Paulusapokalypse aus Nag Hammadi (NHC V/2),” 155. Moreover as has often been noted, according to the better reading, the T. Levi 2:7–10; 3:1–4 also conceives of three heavens). Moreover it is important to note that the LXX translators used the term παράδεισος when referring to the Garden of Eden. The Greek word has also been connected to the place of blessedness for the righteous (e.g., T. Levi 18:10 and Luke 23:43, and cf. with Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, 2:265, 3:532–35). As has been noted by others, the Aramaic portions of Enoch discovered in Qumran Cave 4 have provided further witness to the “Paradise of righteousness” נְשָׁמָה כְּפָרָדָם (J. T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch* [Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1976] 232, [357], 289–90). The “Paradise of righteousness” is also mentioned in the *Vitae Adae et Eva* where Adam ascends, “... raptus sum in paradisum iustitiae” (see n. 31 below). In II (Slavonic) Enoch (8:1f.), Paradise is located above in the third heaven (compare *Apocalypse Mosis* 40:1–2). IV Ezra (4:8) also seems to elevate Paradise above the earth, but there is not universal agreement (see n. 8b by F. I. Andersen, “2 Enoch,” Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:114–15; and see M. Stone, “Paradise in 4 Ezra iv:8 and vii:36, viii:52,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 17 [1966] 85–88). See also the entry for *paradeisos* in the revision of W. Bauer’s *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* by F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979) 614; and cf. the *Aruch Hashalem*, 6:413. One must also ask why the LXX translators render the Garden of Eden by the term Paradise while the later Aramaic Targumim give a more literal translation. Was “Paradise” demythologized at a later time?

¹⁹Schäfer, 28.

²⁰Ibid., 25. Schäfer suggests that the more original version, “he entered in peace and went out in peace” was altered by later mystics and this accounts for the reading in the Vienna manuscript, “he ascended in peace and descended in peace” (Lieberman, tos. Chag. 2:3, 381, and Zuckerman tos. Chag. 2:4, 234). Of course Schäfer is

While terminology is an important aspect of all textual studies, in the case of the four who entered the פָּרֶדֶס, the difference between the terms entering and leaving and between ascending and descending does not change the basic facts of the story. These four sages are said to have undergone a very dangerous experience. In all the parallels of the tradition, one of the sages actually dies and only one of them survives without injury—R. Akiva. Moreover, it is not clear that the version of the story in the Vienna manuscript, which contains the phrase, “R. Akiva ascended in peace and descended in peace,” is secondary.²¹ It might be ventured that the terminology of ascending and descending is used in regards to R. Akiva because he is the only one of the four sages not to be harmed by the encounter. But even if this story is understood as a metaphoric paradigm as Urbach and Schäfer suggested—it is doubtful if it was designed primarily to present R. Akiva as the model Torah teacher, but rather to teach the dangers of mystical contemplation and at the same time to de-mythologize the whole tradition.²²

The exact connection between this story of the four who entered the פָּרֶדֶס and Paul’s experience will remain a mystery. Nevertheless it seems that the two traditions are indeed closely related. Paul speaks about being “taken up” as if his ascent were involuntary or at least unsolicited. The way that he describes the whole affair makes it difficult to determine whether he felt that the ascent was self-induced

correct when he claims that an issue like this cannot be solved by noting that the Vienna manuscript is thought to be superior to that of Erfurt (*ibid.*). However if a mystic was making a modification in the text he most certainly would have used the more common expression of *yarad* for the ascent. In addition, it is also quite possible that a scribe may have adapted the phrase “R. Akiva ascended in peace and descended in peace” to the introduction of the story “four entered the *pardes*.” After a harmonization had been made, other scribes would quite easily have corrected the Tosefta on the basis of the parallels. While it is difficult to be dogmatic on this point, much evidence supports the reading of the Vienna manuscript, “R. Akiva ascended in peace and descended in peace.”

²¹ See the preceding note. The main texts of the story are found in tos. Chagigah 2:3–4; j. Chagigah 77b, chap. 2, hal. 1; b. Chagigah 14–15b; and see now D. Halperin, *The Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1980) 86ff.

²² The various restrictions from early sources which were placed upon those desiring to become involved with the merkabah strengthen this approach, and see Halperin, 19–63. See E. E. Urbach, “Hamasorot Al Torat Hasod Betekufat Hatannaim,” *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to G. Scholem* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967) 12–13 (Hebrew). Urbach suggests that the whole story should be treated as a parable. He interprets the phrase, “R. Akiva ascended in peace and descended in peace” as referring to his climbing the fence of the פָּרֶדֶס in the לְשׁוֹן. But if this were the case surely a fence would have been mentioned in the text.

or not. Paul's description is very intriguing because it is a first hand report about his own experience. The rabbinic story is preserved in narrative form and this may account for some of the differences between the traditions. Paul does not know whether he is in the body or out of the body, a fact which he repeats for emphasis. He begins to tell the story about himself in the third person perhaps in order to express his feeling of detachment during his ascent or less likely as a literary device.²³ Though not all will agree, a careful reading of 2 Corinthians 12 will show that verses 5–10 are most likely a further elaboration of Paul's revelation. Interestingly three times Paul asks that this messenger of Satan be removed from him and he receives the response, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."²⁴ It may be that he made his request and heard this voice as he entered each celestial sphere, though Paul does not explicitly say this himself.

When the connection between 2 Corinthians 12 verses 1–5 and verses 6–10 is thus understood, the whole mystical experience is a response to Paul's complaint concerning his "thorn in the flesh" for which many explanations have been developed. It is most likely that the thorn in the flesh was related to the difficulties and persecution that Paul suffered which are discussed in the context of this epistle.²⁵ This interpretation also fits Paul's expression, the "messenger of Satan," which he used to describe this thorn in the flesh. It harasses Paul in order to prevent him from becoming too elated "by the abundance of revelations" (vs. 7). Hence, Paul's mystical experience seems to have had a dramatic effect and a great influence upon his personal life. The message, "My grace is sufficient," and "My power is made perfect in weakness," was probably what Paul considered to be one of his most profound revelations—at least he selected this experience to demonstrate to the super-pneumatics at Corinth that he also was acquainted better than they with visions and revelations. This message, as well as 'being snatched away,' was important for Paul's purposes.

While Paul does not describe seeing anything specific in this revelation (in contrast to the four sages in rabbinic literature), it

²³2 Cor 12:8–9.

²⁴Of course another reason why Paul repeats himself here may be because he had not fully organized his thoughts before writing. Some have suggested that Paul was referring to someone other than himself because of his use of the third person (e.g., F. Jackson and K. Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979], 4:281 on Acts 22:17). However for among other reasons, this theory hardly seems tenable because it is highly unlikely that Paul would have described someone else's vision in order to impress the pneumatic Christians at Corinth.

²⁵E.g., 2 Cor 11:23–28 and 12:10.

should not be hastily concluded that this experience was not accompanied by some sort of visual phenomena, as well as by the message concerning God's grace and the ἄρρητα ρήματα.²⁶ For one thing Paul does state quite clearly that he has had "visions and revelations of the Lord" (vs. 1). The various revelations described in Acts often include both visual phenomena and auditory messages. Since Paul could not determine whether he was in or out of his body, he was apparently seeing something or he was in some trance-like state or both. Paul is relating a personal experience and one in which he received a special message. He desired to communicate this aspect of his revelation to the Christians at Corinth and not merely to boast about his ascent and the "unutterable things" that cannot be told. In the other visions of Paul described in Acts, one can see that he often received directions or that each revelation had a specific purpose. On the road to Damascus Paul is said to have seen a bright light; in Troas a man from Macedonia appeared to him; and on the ship he saw an angel.²⁷ In 2 Corinthians, Paul does not describe the heavenly spheres, but he is aware that he has entered the παράδεισος in the third heaven and thus he must have seen something.

The story of the four who entered the פְּרוֹסֶס seems to be related to Paul's mystical experience in the third heaven. The precise nature of this relationship will remain somewhat of an enigma because of the fragmentary state of the evidence. Urbach has suggested that the story from rabbinic literature should be interpreted metaphorically. Even though Urbach considers it as a type of allegory, he maintains that the object which the rabbis were viewing (הצִיָּן) was the merkabah.²⁸ Nevertheless Urbach would not describe Akiva's and his colleagues' experience as an ecstatic revelation. Certainly the self-induced mysticism described by Hai Gaon does not seem to be appropriate for these four sages' experience.²⁹ Flusser pointed out that outside of this text in rabbinic literature and 2 Corinthians, the

²⁶Perhaps Schäfer (op. cit. n. 18 above, p. 23), has been too hasty to conclude that Paul only heard and did not see anything. Of course Schäfer's well thought out argument does call attention to the fact that in 2 Corinthians, Paul does not claim to have viewed the merkabah.

²⁷See n. 14 above.

²⁸See E. E. Urbach, "Haimasorot Al Torat Hasod Betekufat Hatannaim," *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to G. Scholem* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967) 12–13. Urbach's position is treated by Schäfer, op. cit., n. 17, p. 26.

²⁹See B. Lewin, *Otzar Hageonim* (Jerusalem, 1931) 13–15, quoted by Halperin, *The Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature*, 3. According to Hai Gaon, the one who possessed the special qualities to look at the merkabah had to prepare himself. He had to fast, place his head between his knees and recite specific songs and hymns. Hai Gaon's description is one that suggests a self-induced trance or ecstatic state. It is difficult to ascertain if some were involved in this kind of activity during Hai Gaon's

terms στήπη or παράδεισος are never used to describe the “destination of the mystic’s ascent of the soul.”³⁰ This fact makes the connections between the texts that much more significant. If Paradise was commonly understood as being located above the earth, then it is no wonder that Paul had to ascend. In the *Vita Adae et Evaē* Adam describes a vision to his son Seth:

... while we were praying, Michael the archangel and messenger of God came to me. And I saw a chariot like the wind and its wheels were fiery. I was carried off into the Paradise of Righteousness, and I saw the LORD sitting and his appearance was unbearable flaming fire. And many thousands of angels were at the right and at the left of the chariot.³¹

This text describes how Adam “was caught up into the Paradise of righteousness” where he saw the Lord. But can this text and Paul’s experience elucidate the story about Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, Elisha ben Avuyah and R. Akiva? What exactly happened to these sages? The truth is that no one will ever know because the rabbinic passages describing the four who entered the στήπη do not elaborate.

The tradition is related about the rabbis and it is unfortunate that no authentic texts have been recovered in which the sages involved describe their own experiences. Paul obviously feels that his journey to the third heaven was a very impressive revelation—one

time. The vivid and detailed description would suggest an affirmative answer. Mystical experience is very difficult for scholars to analyze. One researcher employed this metaphor: scholars studying mysticism are like accountants planning finances—they know all about the treasures of others but are unable to use them. This does not mean that personal mystical experiences would aid scholarly research—but it does point to the difficulties of analyzing someone else’s encounter. Hai Gaon may be making an attempt to understand what happened. In the book of Acts, it may be Luke who adds the detail ‘while he was praying’ to some of the accounts concerning visions (Acts 9:5; 11:5; 22:17) which probably was not in his source but surely is a characteristic Lukan addition (compare the appearance of the word *proseuchomai* in the texts of the synoptics).

³⁰D. Flusser, “Scholem’s Recent Book on Merkabah Literature,” *JJS* 11 (1961) 62.

³¹*Vita Adae et Evaē* 25:1–3 (M. D. Johnston, “Life of Adam and Eve,” Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:266–68, and W. Meyer, *Abhandlungen der Bayrischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 14/3 [1878] 229; the text was discussed by Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition*, 17; see also J. Licht, “Adam and Eve, Book of the Life of,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2:246–47 and cf. with J. Charlesworth, *The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research with a Supplement*, 74–75). On the location of Paradise, see n. 18 above. On the idea that certain verses of scripture like Ezekiel’s merkabah were used in mystical contemplation, compare Urbach, “Hamasorot Al Torat Hasod Betekufat Hatannaim,” 2, 16–17, and Halperin, *The Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature*, 179–85. Adam sees the Lord enthroned above and the merkabah.

that would commend his epistle to the pneumatic Corinthians. Nevertheless Paul does not indicate that this revelation was dangerous but rather describes its meaning to his readers. Like Paul, the rabbis are said to have had some kind of extraordinary experience in the סְגִירָה.

The precise nature of this experience is difficult to define. There is an appropriate uneasiness with the term “mysticism” when it comes to the passage concerning the four rabbis and also with respect to Paul’s testimony in 2 Corinthians. A sharp distinction should be made between a sort of mystical esotericism and an extraordinary religious encounter. However, if one can understand mysticism in the sense of a deep or dynamic spiritual experience, then it could be that both Paul’s testimony and the narrative about the four sages in some way reflect a kind of early pre-Christian mysticism concerning which modern scholarship knows comparatively little. In this way without denying that such experiences have occurred and probably have influenced a number of the great religious geniuses of history, it is possible to de-mystify the spiritual encounter from an extreme esoteric and sometimes self-induced mysticism that appears in some form or another in multiple religious traditions. However, in the final analysis, Paul’s visions and revelations and specifically his experience when taken up to the third heaven should be interpreted in the context of an early stream of pre-Christian Jewish mystical contemplation.³²

ASCENSIO ISAIAE

Ascensio Isaiae also deals with a vision as the text describes the prophet’s ascent through the celestial regions. The *Ascension of Isaiah* was well known and widely circulated. Manuscripts are extant in Ethiopic, in Coptic, in Slavonic, in Latin and some portions of

³² Flusser has pointed to the Essene influence in the second stratum of Christianity in his article, “The Dead Sea Sect and Pre-Pauline Christianity” *Scripta*, 4:215–66. It should be noted that the Essenes believed in the prophetic gift. But one should not be too hasty to see a connection with early Christian pneumatistics (see n. 29 above; and the work of David E. Aune, op. cit. n. 15 above). Nevertheless, in 1 Corinthians 12–14, Paul discusses various πνευματικοί. Fascinatingly enough Paul’s wording, ὅρτι δι ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι, is partially paralleled in some midrashic texts which speak about the divinely inspired utterances and experiences of the prophets and of Moses. In one of these texts preserved in the name of R. Judah bar Ilai, one of the five disciples of R. Akiva who survived the revolt, one finds that the midrash contrasts Moses to the other prophets by observing, “But Moses beheld [prophetic visions] through a polished [glass] *specularium*, as it is said, *The similitude of the Lord doth he behold* (Numbers 12:8).” (Lev. Rabbah 1:14, Soncino translation, 17, see also the critical edition of Margulies, 1:30–32). Thus Moses was able to view the “תְּמִנָּה.” Compare also b. Yebamot 49b, “All the prophets looked into a dim glass [*specularium*], but Moses looked through a clear glass [*specularium*].” See the context in b. Yebamot 49b where Isaiah’s theophany and his words, “I saw the LORD,” became a point of controversy.

Greek. Most of the scholars who have worked with the text agree that it is a composite work, written by a number of authors at different periods. While Laurence, Burkitt, and Burch have argued for the unity of the text,³³ scholarly consensus rests decidedly with the view that the work is a composite variously divided anywhere from two distinct sections to four separate parts.³⁴ The first part is "the Martyrdom of Isaiah" which is thought to be of early Jewish origin. Knibb suggests that it was composed during the period of persecutions of the Jewish people by Antiochus Epiphanes (167–64 B.C.E.).³⁵ Flusser has connected it with the Dead Sea sectarians.³⁶ The other sections seem to augment the account of the Martyrdom in the first section.³⁷ Here it would be ventured that the text is a composite of three basic sections, the "Martyrdom of Isaiah," the "Testament of Hezekiah" and the "Ascension of Isaiah." The last section, which deals with Isaiah's ascension through the heavenly spheres is important for the present discussion.

Nevertheless, it must be remembered that the tradition concerning Isaiah's tragic death at the hands of Manasseh was popular in Jewish, Christian, and Gnostic circles. The Talmud reports that Rabbi Shimon ben Azai found a scroll in Jerusalem which told that Manasseh killed Isaiah.³⁸ The death sentence was decreed because Isaiah had claimed

Both 1 Cor 13:12 and Leviticus Rabbah 1:14 are closely connected to Num 12:8. See Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, 3:452–53; cf. Aruch, 1:191. The midrash deals with exegesis and the relationship of Moses to the other prophets. Paul addresses a specific problem at Corinth.

³³R. H. Charles, *The Ascension of Isaiah* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1900), p. xxxvi—recalls that Laurence, *Ascensio Isaiae Vatis*, 1819, viewed the text as a unit; J. Flemming and H. Duensing, "The Ascension of Isaiah," *New Testament Apocrypha*, eds. Hennecke and Schneemelcher, 2:643, cite F. C. Burkitt, *Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, 1914, and Vacher Burch, *Journal of Theological Studies* 21 (1920) 249ff., as supporting single authorship; cf. James H. Charlesworth, *The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1976) 125–26. See especially the article by David Flusser, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 9:71.

³⁴See M. A. Knibb, "Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah," Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:147–49.

³⁵See Knibb, "Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah," 147–49.

³⁶See David Flusser, "The Apocryphal Book of *Ascensio Isaiae* and the Dead Sea Sect," *Israel Exploration Journal* 3 (1953) 30–47. Flusser has presented some strong arguments concerning the terminology, ideology and historical allusions to the so-called "Martyrdom of Isaiah" which link the text with the Dead Sea sect.

³⁷See Box, *The Ascension of Isaiah*, ix–x. Box further segments the text into "The Testament of Hezekiah" (chapter iii. 13–v. 1a), the completion of Isaiah's Martyrdom (chapter v. 1b–14), and finally "Isaiah's Vision" (chapters vi–xi). On the composite nature of the text, see also M. A. Knibb, "Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah," 147–48.

³⁸B. Yebamot 49b; cf. b. Sanhedrin 103b; and see also j. Sanhedrin 28c, chap. 10, hal. 2 where Isaiah is elevated to the status of Moses—probably to heighten the gravity

to have seen the Lord sitting upon His throne of glory. Isaiah's vision opposed what Moses had taught, namely, that no one may see the Lord and live (Ex 33:20). In an attempt to escape, Isaiah hid himself within a tree. Manasseh had the tree sawn in two and killed the prophet in the process. Thus Isaiah was executed because he claimed to have seen the Holy One enthroned on high! The whole story is somewhat ironic because Manasseh is by no means portrayed in the Hebrew Scriptures as a king who displayed interest in theological purity and yet Manasseh had Isaiah executed because of the prophet's mystical vision of the Lord enthroned in His glory.³⁹ Does this tradition betray tension against mystical contemplation?⁴⁰

Within the Christian tradition, Isaiah's death is more than likely alluded to in the New Testament. The Epistle to the Hebrews relates that some saints were sawn asunder, contending for their faith (Heb 11:37). Often with good reason, commentators have suggested that here Hebrews seems to make reference to Isaiah's death. Early Christian writers such as Justin Martyr (*Dial. c. Tryph.* chapter cxx) and Tertullian (*De patientia* chapter xiv; *Scorpiace*, chapter viii) mention Isaiah's execution by the wood saw. The tradition was also known to Origen, Epiphanius, and Jerome.⁴¹

The reference to Isaiah from the Nag Hammadi Tractates, is related to the prophet's death. The writer of *The Testimony of Truth* was familiar with the legend. Unfortunately, some lacunae are found in the text, but the translators have rendered the passage as follows:

But the word of [...] and spirit [...] is the Father [...] for the man [...] like Isaiah, who was sawed with a saw, (and) he became two. [So

of Manasseh's sin and the greatness of God's compassion in forgiving him. At any rate, in the Jerusalem Talmud the greatness of Isaiah is emphasized, for like Moses, God spoke to him more directly. See C. C. Torrey, *The Lives of the Prophets* (Philadelphia: The Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, 1946) 20, 34; D. R. A. Hare, "The Lives of the Prophets," J. Charlesworth, ed., *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:385f.; and also M. Stone, *Armenian Apocrypha Relating to the Patriarchs and Prophets* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1982) 160–61 and cf. n. 1.

³⁹Cf. preceding note and R. H. Charles, "The Martyrdom of Isaiah," *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 2:158. Also see Billerbeck, 3:747. Also it should be noted that Flusser observed, "It is not surprising that the author of *Ascensio Isaiae* projects the religious disputes of his own day into the period of Isaiah, and presents them as a dispute between Isaiah and the false prophets," idem, "The Apocryphal Book of *Ascensio Isaiae* and the Dead Sea Sect," 40.

⁴⁰It is reasonable to assume that some sages would have viewed visions and mystical experiences as a possible danger. A charlatan could have employed stories of visions to lead the people astray.

⁴¹For a more complete list of references see Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891),

also the Son of Man divides] us by [the word of the] cross. It [divides the day from] the night and the corruptible [from] incorruptibility, and it [divides] the males from the females. But [Isaiah] is the type of the body. The saw is the word of the Son of Man which separates from the error of the angels.⁴²

Here the author has taken the tradition and allegorized it into his framework of dualism. He seems to have stylized this passage on the famous verse in the Epistle of the Hebrews:

The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, and joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (Heb 4:12 NIV).

At least, these texts show that the tradition concerning Isaiah's death was known to Jewish, Christian, and Gnostic writers alike.

When the story concerning Isaiah's death existed independently is difficult to determine. The legend is apparently based upon the scriptural accounts of Manasseh's blood letting (2 Kgs 21:16) and perhaps upon the reports concerning King David's executions carried out by the means of saws (2 Sam 12:31; I Chron 20:3, cf. LXX). The tradition seems to be an early one. Of course, it is difficult to answer the question: How long did these texts and traditions exist before they were made into a composite work? An equally important difficulty is the tradition's form and stage of development when the above ancient writers became acquainted with it: these early references do not necessarily refer to the same text or to the same form of the text which has been preserved today.⁴³

division II, 3:144–45, and the new edition, revised and edited by G. Vermes, F. Millar and M. Goodman, 3/1:337ff.

⁴² *The Testimony of Truth* (IX, 3.40,105); quoted from James M. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977) 409–10 (referred to ahead as *NHL*).

⁴³ Cf. Flusser, "The Apocryphal Book of *Ascensio Isaiae* and the Dead Sea Sect," 31. The difficult chronological problems of the text cannot be avoided. It is generally agreed that the present form of the text is not to be considered earlier than the second century (Charlesworth, 125–26). However, the various sections of the text appear to come from the first century. First it should be noted that the Testament of Hezekiah seems to be dependent on the *Ascension of Isaiah* (Chapter 3.13; cf. A. K. Helmbold, "Gnostic Elements in the 'Ascension of Isaiah,'" *New Testament Studies* 17 [1972] 227). Then it must be observed that a union of three independent themes has occurred within the text: 1) Antichrist, 2) Beliar 3) Nero redivivus. Such a fusion of motifs would most probably have occurred not long after Nero's death (68 A.D.) and seemingly not much later than 100 A.D. Of course, one must maintain an open mind in dealing with texts that have a complex history like *Ascensio Isaiae*. (Cf. Charles, *The Ascension of Isaiah*, pp. li–lxxv; Daniélou, 12ff.). See also M. A. Knibb, "Martyrdom

The vision of Isaiah is contained in chapters six through eleven. This unit is properly called a vision because Isaiah goes into a trance and an angel from the seventh heaven comes to him. The text gives the following description:

And while he [Isaiah] was speaking with the Holy Spirit in the hearing of them all, he became silent, and his mind was taken up from him, and he did not see the men who were standing before him. His eyes indeed were open, but his mouth was silent, and the mind in his body was taken up from him. But his breath was (still) in him, for he was seeing a vision. And the angel who was sent to show him (the vision) was not of this firmament, nor was he from the angels of glory of this world, but he came from the seventh heaven (VI.10ff.).⁴⁴

Thus Isaiah commences his vision and his ascent through the heavenlies. Later Isaiah relates the vision to the king and the prophets, but not to the people (VI.16–17; XI.39).

The text's view toward the structure of the cosmos fits well into its contemporary understanding of the heavenly spheres. The author describes seven heavens. His main concern is not to give a detailed description of the heavenlies, for unlike Slavonic Enoch he avoids elaborate descriptions of the heavens, the angels, or their tasks. The writer of *Ascensio Isaiae* makes little differentiation between the first five heavens. A throne is situated in the center of the sphere with angels on the left and angels on the right.⁴⁵ The angels on the right

and Ascension of Isaiah," 149–50. Knibb views the martyrdom as coming from the end of the first century but prefers a second century date for the ascension. However, he follows Charles' argument quite closely and does not present compelling evidence to reject Charles' conclusion concerning the date, i.e., "Thus the composition of the Vision in its primitive form G belongs to the close of the first century" (Charles, *Ascension*, p. xlvi). Indeed some form of the text of the *Ascension of Isaiah* may well have existed before the beginning of the second century. At least while the date cannot be determined with precision, nothing in the narrative points to a later time.

⁴⁴Here the *Ascension of Isaiah* provides a description of the visionary's state while he is experiencing his vision. Few texts actually provide these details and this should be compared both to the *Epistula Apostolorum* (20–21, op. cit. n. 10) and also to Paul's description in 2 Cor 12:2, ". . . whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into Paradise . . ." (see also n. 18 above). Concerning the angel who appears to Isaiah, compare also Enoch 20:8 "Remiel, one of the holy angels, whom God set over those who rise" (Charles, *The Book of Enoch*, 44, see note on 20:8 as the text is missing in a number of manuscripts). In the present work, Knibb's translation of *Ascensio Isaiae* has been used (M. A. Knibb, "Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah," op. cit. n. 34; and see R. H. Charles, *The Ascension of Isaiah*, London: Adam and Charles Black, 1900) and compare E. Tisserant, *Ascension d'Isaie* (Paris, 1909). A new critical edition of the text would be highly useful.

⁴⁵While this on the whole is true, it should be noted that, in comparison with some other texts, the writer of the *Ascension of Isaiah* provides more information concerning the heavenly realms than some other similar narratives.

are somewhat more glorious than those on the left side. The angels praise Him who sits on the throne in the seventh heaven (VII.16–17).⁴⁶ The praise of the angels on the right is superior to the praise of the angels who occupy the left. As Isaiah ascends, the heavens become more glorious and the praise is more sublime. The higher heavens have more light than the lower heavens. One finds a dualism between light and darkness. For instance, in the sixth heaven Isaiah's angelic guide explains: "If you rejoice over this light, how much more (will you rejoice) in the seventh heaven when you see the light where the LORD is and his Beloved . . ." (VIII.25). As Isaiah relates the vision, he comments that on earth there is "much darkness"⁴⁷ when compared to the heavenly region. In the sixth heaven, the scene changes and all the angels look alike and their praise is alike. No throne is present. The power of the seventh heaven is so strong that it coordinates the functions of the sixth heavenly sphere. The angel makes this clear to Isaiah and explains: ". . . (they [angels of the sixth heaven] are directed) by the power of the seventh heaven, where the One who is not named dwells, and his Chosen One . . ." (Chapter VIII.7).

A similar structure of seven heavens is found in the *Apocryphon of John*. Yaldabaoth has fashioned for himself seven heavens with rulers for each realm.⁴⁸ This text provides the following description: "And he [Yaldabaoth] placed seven kings—corresponding to the firmaments of heaven—over the seven heavens and five over the depth of the abyss, that they may reign" (II.1.11.5). However, this cosmic structure is not unique to Gnosticism. Seven firmaments are also found in the Testament of Levi (according to some readings) and also in Slavonic Enoch. One of the homiletical midrashim Pesikta Derav Kahana⁴⁹ describes the Divine Presence ascending and descending through the seven heavens.⁵⁰ The Midrash on Psalms indicates that

⁴⁶This is stated in the first heaven. "And I asked the angel who lead me, and I said to him: 'To whom is this praise directed?' And he said to me, 'To the praise of [the One who sits in] the seventh heaven, the One who rests in the holy world, and to his Beloved, from where I was sent to you. To there it is directed.'" (Chapter VII. 16–17).

⁴⁷The *Ascension of Isaiah* VIII. 24.

⁴⁸Andrew K. Helmbold, "Gnostic Elements in the 'Ascension of Isaiah'", *New Testament Studies* 18 (1972) 225.

⁴⁹Hermann L. Strack, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (New York: Atheneum, 1978) 210–11; and see now the extensive revision by G. Stemberger, *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch* (Munich: Beck, 1982) 270ff.; and cf. George F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 1:168; and see the revision by G. Vermes and F. Millar of E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1973), 1:96f.

⁵⁰Pesikta Derav Kahana, 1:1; Bernard Mandelbaum ed., *Pesikta de Rav Kahana* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962), 1:2. Cf. W. Braude and I. Kapstein trans., *'Pesikta-de-Rab-Kahana* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication

there may have been a progressive development in the sages' understanding concerning the celestial regions. It says that "our teachers" taught that there are two heavens on the basis of the verse in Psalms 68:33 (34 in Hebrew), "To him that rideth upon the heaven of heavens" (KJV). The *darshan* continues that others maintained that there are three heavens, as it was said, "the heaven and heaven of heavens" (I Kings 8:27), but Rabbi Eleazer taught that there are seven heavens and then he names each one.⁵¹ This idea was apparently well known for Rabbi Meir lists the seven firmaments in *Avot de Rabbi Nathan* and they also appear in other rabbinic texts.⁵² To support the theory that a conceptual development occurred, it should be noted that the Apostle Paul and an early recension of the Testament of Levi mention only three heavens.⁵³ The *Ascension of Isaiah*'s seven celestial spheres is acceptable to a Jewish and to a Gnostic understanding of

Society, 1975) 5–6. On the number of heavens, see also the important discussion of Tabor, *Things Unutterable*, 116ff.

⁵¹The Midrash on Psalms, on Psalm 114:2, S. Buber, *Midrash Tehilim* (Israel, reprint 1977) 236a. Cf. W. Braude, trans; *The Midrash on Psalms* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 2:215. In a parallel passage to this text, the tradition is attributed to R. Jeremiah b. Eleazar which is probably due to scribal confusion (*Yalkut Shimeoni*, vol. I, remez 855). The conception of seven heavens also appears in other midrashic texts: *Yalkut Machiri* on Ps 114:5 (parallel to Midrash on Psalms; also attributed to R. Eleazar) and on Ps 24:22 (Resh Lakish); *Deuteronomy Rabbah* 2:32 (Rav [probably a scribal error] says there are two heavens while R. Eleazar names seven); *Leviticus Rabbah* 29:11 (anonymous, cf. M. Margulies' excellent critical Hebrew edition, 3:680); cf. also *Numbers Rabbah* 12:17 (the amoraim R. Hunu and R. Abin are mentioned in the context); *Song of Songs Rabbah* 6:4,2; *Esther Rabbah* 1:12 (see the English translations in H. Freedman, ed. *Midrash Rabbah* [Soncino, 1951]). In b. *Chagigah* 12b R. Judah (bar Ilai, one of Akiva's disciples?) says that there are two firmaments but the Amora from a later period, Resh Lakish claims that there are seven. See also following note.

⁵²Avot Derabbi Natan, Recension A, Chapter 37, Solomon Schechter ed., *Aboth de Rabbi Nathan* (Israel, reprint, 1980) 55b. Cf. Judah Goldin trans., *The Fathers according to Rabbi Nathan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956) chapter 37. Cf. some other Rabbinic passages that present a similar cosmology or are parallel to the above references: *Pesikta Rabbati*, 5 (Friedmann's edition, 18b); and see Friedmann's notes there. The Midrash on Psalms, Ps 92:2 (Buber's edition 201b); and see also the preceding note. Cf. P. Alexander, "3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch," J. Charlesworth, ed. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:239f.

⁵³2 Cor 12:1–4; Paul says that he encountered Paradise in the third heaven. While this does not necessarily prove that according to Paul there were only three firmaments and no more, it seems that this indeed is Paul's cosmology. Moreover Charles suggested that the earlier version of the *Testament of Levi* contained three heavens and was later expanded to seven heavens (*The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, 2:304). In 1 Enoch 14:8–18 one discovers a vision in which Enoch rises: 1) from the earth into the heavens; 2) through a wall of fire into a "house;" and finally 3) into a second house wherein is located the divine throne. While Enoch was not primarily interested in describing heavenly geography, it must be observed that its description fits the three firmament conception quite well. While it seems reasonable that a system of a smaller number of heavens was later expanded, this is not absolutely

the heavenlies and cannot be said to be distinct from the ancient world's view of the regions beyond.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, the *Ascension of Isaiah* has some remarkable affinities to the Gnostic scheme. The thrones in the five lower heavens are occupied by the most glorious angel of that particular sphere. It seems that he leads the praise of the other angels and that he also determines who enters and who exits his celestial realm. This can be paralleled to the kings who reign in the seven heavens in the *Apocryphon of John*. The marked difference between the two schemes is that the seven celestial realms in *Ascensio Isaiae* seem to be in harmony with the Beloved, and He who is enthroned in the seventh heaven. While it is true that the power or influence of the seventh heaven decreases with each degree that is lower than the seventh heaven, the spiritual struggle is located in the earthly realm where the angels of Satan are in conflict and are said to be "envying one another."⁵⁵ This great disharmony is found in the lower terrestrial region. Indeed it is called the "alien world."⁵⁶ The lower firmament is viewed as having hostilities between the angelic beings.⁵⁷ In contrast to the *Ascension of Isaiah*, the *Apocryphon of John* views these seven cosmic regents to be united with Yaldabaoth in their rebellion against the highest deity.

Another important element presented in Isaiah's vision is its concept of the trinity. Isaiah's vision shows the primitive stage of an emerging trinitarian formulation. The text's expression of the trinity may be summed up in the words of Isaiah: "And I rejoiced very much that those who love the Most High and his Beloved will at their end go up there through the angel of the Holy Spirit."⁵⁸ In the sixth heaven Isaiah exclaims, "and there they all named the primal Father

certain and more research is needed. For instance, though not directly connected, one may compare the ancient Egyptian belief in the dangerous journey of the soul passing from life into death through the numerous gates which involved dealing with the different gatekeepers (see Zandee, *Death as an Enemy*, 25–31, 112–25 [especially 123]; H. Goedicke, "The Egyptian Idea of Passing from Life to Death," *Orientalia* 24 [1955] 225–39; cf. J. Bonomi and S. Sharpe, *The Alabaster Sarcophagus of Oimeneptah I* (London, 1864); A. de Buck and A.H. Gardiner, *The Egyptian Coffin Texts* [University of Chicago, 1935] and cf. also n. 13 above concerning the Greek view of death).

⁵⁴ Bousset, 234, saw Iranian influence reflected in this cosmology.

⁵⁵ *The Ascension of Isaiah* VII.9.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, VI.9.

⁵⁷ J. Daniélou has pointed out the background of this belief, "Besides Satan and his angels there are the lower demons, the πνεύματα. *I Enoch* saw them as the souls of the giants who had been born of the union of the Watchers and the daughters of men, and Justin accepted this explanation (*II Apol.* v, 2–6) as did Athenagoras (*Suppl.* 1,24). It occurs in the *Clementine Homilies* (VIII.18). Whatever origin is ascribed to them, however, these demons live in the atmosphere surrounding the earth," *idem*, 190–91.

⁵⁸ *The Ascension of Isaiah* VII.23.

and His Beloved, ‘the Christ’ and the Holy Spirit all with one voice.”⁵⁹ The Beloved is identified as Christ and the Most High is the Father. Perhaps the most interesting element in the formulation is the understanding of the Spirit as an angel. One of the functions assigned to the angel of the Holy Spirit is to guide the righteous through the heavens.⁶⁰ All three are worshipped.⁶¹

Helmbold has tried to show some of the “Gnostic elements” that are found in the *Ascension of Isaiah*. In his article, he points to similar trinitarian doctrines in the Nag Hammadi literature. One of his examples is from the *Apocryphon of John* (II, 1.2.13f):

You are not unfamiliar with this likeness are you? That is to say, be not timid. I am the one who [is with you (pl.)] for ever. I [am the Father], I am the Mother, I am the Son. I am the unpolluted and incorruptible one.

A similar passage is found in the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (III,2:41,9):

Three powers come forth from him; they are the Father, the Mother (and) the Son, from the living silence, what come forth from the incorruptible Father. These [came forth] from the silence of the unknown Father.

These texts provide the normal trinitarian formulation from the Nag Hammadi literature, namely the Father, the Mother, and the Son.⁶² The Mother replaces the Holy Spirit. This development is of course a radical deviation from the texts in *Ascensio Isaiae* where the formulation appears to be based upon some early Christian tradition (cf. Didache 7:1) or perhaps even upon the one widespread reading from the gospel of Matthew where this well-known baptismal formula is stated, “. . . baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”⁶³

However, it is of great interest that the Gospel of the Hebrews contains a passage that links the Holy Spirit to the mother of Jesus.

⁵⁹Ibid., VIII.18.

⁶⁰Ibid., VII.23.

⁶¹Ibid., IX.27–36.

⁶²Helmbold, 224.

⁶³Matt 28:19 (ASV). The original reading of this text probably did not contain this formula, see the critical apparatus in the 25th edition of K. Aland’s Greek text and his *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*. As David Flusser suggested, the better text and earlier reading was, “. . . teaching all nations in my name” (according to the readings of Eusebius before the Council of Ancyra—cf. Flusser, “The Conclusion of Matthew,” *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 5 [1967] 110–20). For no apparent reason, this text has been deleted from the 26th edition of the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament!

Origen and Jerome both quote this narrative a number of times in their commentaries, “Even so did my [the Savior’s] mother, the Holy Spirit, take me by one of the hairs of my head and carry me away to the great mountain Tabor.”⁶⁴ Perhaps the designation of the Holy Spirit as the mother developed from speculation surrounding the incarnation of Jesus or even because the grammatical gender of the word spirit in Hebrew is usually feminine. The *Apocryphon of John* calls the Holy Spirit the “mother of the living.” This passage describes how the Sophia of the Epinoia created “the likeness of himself” without the consent of the Spirit. Afterwards:

. . . she surrounded it with a luminous cloud, and she placed a throne in the middle of the cloud that no one might see it except the Holy Spirit who is called the mother of the living. And she called his name Yaltabaoth.⁶⁵

The notion of the Holy Spirit being an angel can also be paralleled in the Jewish Christian sect of the Elkesaites. Hippolytus provides the account that a huge angel some ninety six miles high had reportedly revealed a book to Elchasai. This male angel was accompanied by a female angel. He writes, “The male is the son of God but the female is called the Holy Spirit.”⁶⁶ Here, the Elkesaites not only view the Holy Spirit as an angel, but as a feminine angel as well. The identification of the Holy Spirit with an angel or with a female figure such as the mother of Jesus seems to be connected in some way to an early Jewish Christian theology.⁶⁷

The last item to be observed about the ascension is Isaiah’s transformation. Isaiah’s form undergoes a change as he ascends to each sphere. Isaiah exclaimed to his angelic guide, “And I said to the angel who (was with me), for the glory of my face was being transformed as I went up from heaven to heaven, ‘Nothing of the vanity of that world is named here’” (*Ascensio Isaiae* VII.25). The leader of the praise in the sixth heaven restrains Isaiah from entering the seventh heaven because of his garment. Once he has received the proper

⁶⁴P. Vielhauer, “Jewish-Christian Gospels,” in E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, eds., *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1:160 and also especially p. 164 where the passage is quoted. Vielhauer cites the following references: Origen, *Com. on Jn.* II.12; *Hom. on Jer.* XV.4; Jerome, *Com. on Micah* 7:6; *Com. on Isa.* 40:9; *Com. on Ez.* 16.13.

⁶⁵*The Apocryphon of John* (II, 1, 10.9f.), *NHL*, 104.

⁶⁶Hippolytus, *refutatio omn. haer.*, Prol. IX, 13.1–3; Epiphanius *Pan.* 19.4.1 and 53.1.9; and see F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973) 56, 114, 115, 158, 159, 196, 197; cf. Daniélou, 65.

⁶⁷Here, it should also be noted that Origen and Jerome quote what has been named the “Gospel of the Hebrews” as identifying the Holy Spirit with the Savior’s mother. Furthermore, the Elkesaites viewed the Holy Spirit as a feminine angel in the

garment from the Beloved, he enters. Again he undergoes transformations to join in the angels' praise.⁶⁸ Likewise, when the Beloved descends, he also undergoes transformation. The idea of Christ's physical metamorphosis is already alluded to in the so-called Christological hymns. Thus in Phil 2:6-9a one reads,

... who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him . . .⁶⁹

Here the word μορφή is very significant. Christ was transformed "taking on the form of a servant." Moreover in *Ascensio Isaiae* his descent is hidden from the five lower heavens and also from the terrestrial realm. This seems to go back to an early Christian tradition which teaches that Christ's identity was concealed from the god of this world.⁷⁰ This teaching may be reflected in Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians, ". . . none of the rulers of this age has understood;

passage quoted above. The quotations from the Nag Hammadi texts omit the Holy Spirit in their trinitarian formulations. Instead, "the Mother" appears. Thus one discovers a connection between the Gnostic texts and the so-called "Jewish-Christian" Gospel of the Hebrews and the Elkesaites. Nevertheless the early Christian traditions concerning the birth of Jesus could possibly have caused similar independent interpretations by different sects. Various approaches can be found among scholars when they try to define Jewish Christianity. Of course the sources compiled by A. Klijn and G. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects*, have greatly contributed to research; and cf. Hans-Joachim Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969) 9ff.; Daniélou, 7ff.; Jakob Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979) 146ff.; the important study by S. Pines, *The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity according to a New Source* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1966); and the unpublished doctoral dissertation by R. Pritz, "The Jewish Christian Sect of the Nazarenes" (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1981; a revised version is currently being prepared by Magnes Press). For more bibliography, see P. Vielhauer, "Jewish Christian Gospels," E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, eds., *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1:117.

⁶⁸ *The Ascension of Isaiah* IX.30.

⁶⁹ Flusser suggested that the transformation of the Beloved in the descent is already alluded to in the so-called Christological hymns whose sources are probably pre-Pauline. The same idea is expressed in the *Epistula Apostolorum* 14 which is remarkably similar to *Ascensio Isaiae*. (See H. Duensing, "Epistula Apostolorum," E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, eds., *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1:197-98). The idea of transformation in both texts was noted by Duensing, *ibid.*, 190 and see also M. Hornschuh, *Studien zur Epistula Apostolorum* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1965) 2ff.

⁷⁰ *The Ascension of Isaiah* X. 10ff.

for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord.”⁷¹

The infrastructure of ideas, the concept of the world, and some basic elements in Isaiah’s vision could be easily transferred into a fully developed Gnostic framework. However a Gnostic believer would feel that the author of *Ascensio Isaiae* was not fully enlightened. The text could quite possibly have been used by Jewish Christian orders, Christian groups, or semi-Gnostic sects.⁷²

THE APOCALYPSE OF PAUL

The intriguing Nag Hammadi tractate, *The Apocalypse of Paul*, describes Paul’s heavenly journey to the tenth heaven. He is directed through the cosmic regions by the spirit who acts as his celestial guide and helps him pass the gatekeeper in the seventh heaven.⁷³ The gatekeeper is called the old man and he tries to prevent Paul from completing his journey and returning to his fellow spirits in the tenth heavenly domain. The other twelve apostles are mentioned, but it seems that Paul is given priority over them.⁷⁴ A preference for Paul

⁷¹1 Cor 2:8 (ASV). The position that “the rulers of this age” refers to demonic powers has recently been challenged by G. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 103–4, and see especially n. 22.

⁷²The semi-Christian groups are those who could accept a Docetic view of Christ (*The Ascension of Isaiah XI*). Gnostic groups may have used the text, but the point here is that the *Ascension of Isaiah* itself is not a Gnostic text. The Gnostic would sense that the author did not know some essential facts, e.g., the division of the deity (cf. R. McL. Wilson, “Jewish Christianity and Gnosticism,” *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 60 (1972) 263f. and Hans Jonas’ discussion in J. P. Hyatt, *The Bible in Modern Scholarship* [London: Kingsgate Press, 1966] 286ff.). While not all Jews were very knowledgeable about their religious traditions, it seems quite probable that the text was compiled by a Jewish Christian. One can observe that the text is set in the atmosphere of Jewish apocalyptic. The cosmology, the angelology, the throne room, the angelic guide, and other elements all have antecedents in Jewish literature. This does not mean that they are uniquely Jewish. Yet, the culminating impression given by the text is inescapable. Also, the identification of the Holy Spirit with an angel is not without its significance (cf. Box, p. xxv). At this point, the author can only concur with Box’s suggestion, “. . . the ‘Vision’ (vi–xi) was, at the earliest, composed at the latter end of the first century A.D., and probably by a Jewish Christian” (Box, p. xxlv). The reasons for an early date for the sources of the ascension have been noted above (n. 43). Daniélou views the text as coming from the first century (the period between Nero’s death and 80 or 90) and postulates Jewish Christian authorship. Other scholars hold to the view that the vision was a Christian composition (Charles, p. viii; Charlesworth, 125–26; J. Flemming and H. Duensing, 643).

⁷³*The Apocalypse of Paul* V,2:18,20; Ibid., V,2:23, 2–30.

⁷⁴This point is debatable. For instance, the other apostles arrive in the tenth heaven ahead of Paul. However, the whole narrative revolves around Paul’s experience. It is Paul who successfully leads the conflict with the old man figure. Is it possible that

may be identified as a Valentinian feature.⁷⁵ The narrative is concerned with Paul's ascent and transformation into a spiritual being. The translators have noted three different episodes in the text: 1) an epiphany scene, 2) a judgment scene, and 3) the ascension motif.⁷⁶

In the epiphany scene Paul meets a small child on the mountain of Jericho, as he is traveling to Jerusalem.⁷⁷ Apparently, the small child symbolizes Christ. This view is proposed by the translators who point to other similar texts that parallel this thought, where a child represents Christ (*Apocryphon of John* BG 2 20, 19–21,4; *Acts of John* 88).⁷⁸

The narrative of the epiphany scene appears to echo Paul's Epistle to the Galatians.⁷⁹ In this letter, Paul explains that he received the gospel through the revelation of Jesus Christ (ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ).⁸⁰ The title of this codex, the *Apocalypse of Paul*, therefore reflects Paul's term *apocalypsis* in Galatians. The city of Jerusalem also appears in both narratives. As the passage in Galatians continues, Paul did not go up to Jerusalem immediately, in order to have his message approved by the other apostles; only later did he make his way to Jerusalem and meet with Peter and James. Another point of contact between Galatians and the *Apocalypse of Paul* is Paul's conversation with the young child. The child designates Paul as the one who was blessed from his mother's womb.⁸¹ This expression from the epiphany scene apparently comes directly from Paul's

his confrontation with the old man enables the others to ascend (*The Apocalypse of Paul* V, 2:23, 30–24,2)? At one point during the journey, Paul passes the other apostles who were before him (ibid. 22, 14–16). In short, it seems that Paul is given prominence over the other apostles (cf. William Murdock and George MacRae, "The Apocalypse of Paul," James Robinson ed., *Nag Hammadi Codices* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979) 48–49 (noted ahead as *NHC*).

⁷⁵ *NHC*, 49; George MacRae and William Murdock, "The Apocalypse of Paul," *NHL*, 239.

⁷⁶ *NHC*, 48. Cf. Klauck, "Die Himmelfahrt des Paulus (2 Kor 12,2–4) in der koptischen Paulusapokalypse aus Nag Hammadi (NHC V/2)," 167.

⁷⁷ *The Apocalypse of Paul* V,2:18, 5–16; 19,12; cf. with translators note on V,2:18,5. The significance of Jericho is unclear. The writer of the apocalypse is acquainted with the route from Jericho to Jerusalem. Whether he was indeed familiar with the geography of Palestine cannot be ascertained from this evidence because he could have known this travel route from other sources (for example Luke 10:29–37). For the significance of Jerusalem, cf. Klauck, "Die Himmelfahrt des Paulus (2 Kor 12,2–4) in der koptischen Paulusapokalypse aus Nag Hammadi (NHC V/2)," 185–86.

⁷⁸ *NHC*, 48; *NHL*, 239. Compare also Epiphanius, *Pan.*, 30,3,6 (F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects*, 178–79) where some of the members of Jewish-Christian sects are said to have believed that the Spirit who is Christ had come upon the boy Jesus.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Gal 1:12.

⁸¹ *The Apocalypse of Paul* V,2:18, 12–14.

Galatian letter, “But He who had set me apart, *even* from my mother’s womb, and called me through His grace was pleased to reveal His Son in me” (Gal 1:15–16a ASV).

In the epiphany episode, not only does the young child serve as a figure of Christ, but he also has another important significance in the text: he identifies himself as the Spirit. Functioning as a leader or as a semi-divine guide, the Spirit accompanies Paul during his revelation and during his ascent through the heavens. This spirit is also referred to as the Holy Spirit.⁸²

The writer of the *Apocalypse of Paul* does not give an extensive description of the heavenlies. In this respect, the *Ascension of Isaiah* provides a much fuller picture of each celestial realm. Here, the text skips the first three heavens entirely and takes Paul to the fourth heaven. It is difficult to determine if this is an actual journey or only a revelation. Unfortunately, the first part of the text has not been recovered or it might have alleviated this difficulty. Nor is it possible to know exactly when the journey occurs. Nevertheless, it may be cautiously presumed that this is an interpretation of Paul’s experience which he describes in his second epistle to the Corinthian congregation. Even though this is true, in the Corinthian passage, Paul reports that he was lifted up into the third heaven, which is contrary to the Nag Hammadi document where he passes through the seventh heaven to Ogdoad and continues rising on to the tenth celestial realm. It may be conjectured that the author did not consider the evil domain of the old man in his mathematical formulation and only started counting the heavens at the point in which Paul was liberated at Ogdoad.

The judgment and punishment motif has been gleaned from Jewish apocalyptic and seems to be dependent upon the *Testament of Abraham*.⁸³ The *Testament of Abraham* presents several textual and redactional problems,⁸⁴ but the core material of the book seems to go back to a Jewish provenance and is probably based on Semitic sources.⁸⁵ The present form of the text has been re-edited and redacted, as is indicated from the two recensions. Christian influences

⁸²Ibid., 18, 20; 19, 20–26.

⁸³One other example besides the *Testament of Abraham* (chapter 10) can be found in 1 Enoch 56, 1–3.

⁸⁴M. R. James, *The Testament of Abraham* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Krauss Reprint Limited, 1967) 54–55. See now G. Nickelsburg, *Studies in the Testament of Abraham* (Missoula, Montana: Society of Biblical Literature, 1976).

⁸⁵G. H. Box, *The Testament of Abraham* (London: SPCK, 1927), p. xv. Stone has made a new translation based on James’ Greek text cited above (n. 65). Michael Stone, *The Testament of Abraham* (Missoula, Montana: The Society of Biblical Literature, 1972). Now the theory of a Semitic original for the *Testament of Abraham* has been seriously questioned, E. P. Sanders, “*Testament of Abraham*,” J. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 1:873–74.

have been introduced into the text.⁸⁶ The motif as it appears in the *Apocalypse of Paul* is more similar to the longer recension of the *Testament of Abraham*, which James and Box consider to be, generally speaking, less original than the shorter recension.⁸⁷ The translators of the *Apocalypse of Paul* noted that the judgment section in the Coptic version of the *Testament of Abraham* is even more similar to the Apocalypse's version.⁸⁸

Paul's ascent begins with the young child asking Paul to let his mind awaken.⁸⁹ During the ascent, Paul is instructed to view his likeness upon the earth.⁹⁰ Apparently, this is to answer the exegetical question that arises from Paul's account of his ascension experience in the Corinthian letter. Paul wrote that he was uncertain whether he had remained in his body or whether he had arisen out of his body.⁹¹ At the beginning of the Apocalypse narrative, the twelve apostles are above or ahead of Paul; however, in the sixth heaven Paul passes them.⁹² Because he passes the twelve, the text appears to exalt Paul above the other apostles, although they arrive at the tenth heaven ahead of him. However, Paul is the one who contends with the old man in the seventh sphere and this may be what allows the twelve to go on before him. This indicates that Paul still occupies a prominent position in relation to the remaining apostles. Moreover, the entire narrative centers around Paul and the twelve are of secondary importance to him.⁹³

Naturally, the most important aspect of the text is Paul's transformation into a spiritual being. The old man of the seventh heaven appears to be connected to the evil God of Israel who is enthroned on high in Jewish literature.⁹⁴ Here he is the Demiurge figure who tries to prevent Paul from completing his journey.⁹⁵ He asked Paul where he is going. Paul answers with the phrase, "I am going to the place from which I came."⁹⁶ This, of course, is an important element in the

⁸⁶James, 50–55.

⁸⁷Box, *The Testament of Abraham*, p. xii; James, 49.

⁸⁸NHC, 48. Unfortunately, the Coptic version of the *Testament of Abraham* was unavailable to this author, but when the text was discussed with George MacRae, he reiterated the point. Namely, the Coptic Version of the short recension of the *Testament of Abraham* (Chapter 10) forms the basis for the Nag Hammadi codex. It should also be noted that such a judgment motif is not unusual in Jewish apocalyptic (e.g., Enoch 56:1–3).

⁸⁹*The Apocalypse of Paul* V,2:18,22; 19, 10.

⁹⁰Ibid., 19, 26–32.

⁹¹2 Cor 12:3.

⁹²*The Apocalypse of Paul* V,2:22, 14–16.

⁹³See nn. 74, 75 above.

⁹⁴Isa 6:1ff.; 1 Enoch 14:17ff.

⁹⁵NHC, 48–49.

⁹⁶*The Apocalypse of Paul* V,2:23, 8–10.

Gnostic religion; the divine spark has to make its ascent back to the highest deity.⁹⁷ After Paul passes through Ogdoad, the eighth sphere, and the ninth celestial region, he enters the tenth heaven where he is greeted by the now transformed apostles, his fellow spirits.⁹⁸ Thus, Paul and the apostles have undergone transformation into spiritual beings.

One fascinating but bold question remains to be asked about this text: What is the author's motive? Of course, the question of motive or intention is not answered satisfactorily or with a great amount of confidence. One suggestion is that the author had an exegetical motive in mind. His interest to enlarge or to interpret an unclear or an obscure passage of the New Testament has been observed in his treatment of the Pauline epistles. He wants to fill in the missing details. The second suggestion is that the author wrote from a polemical concern.⁹⁹ This theme is seen in his conflict with the old man who best represents the God of Israel. Indeed, the Father who rules the seventh heaven in *Ascensio Isaiae* has been transformed into a Demiurge figure. Of course, other possibilities exist. The author develops various themes around his exegetical interests, but the polemical interest is quite prominent.

THE ASCENSION OF ISAIAH AND THE APOCALYPSE OF PAUL

A cosmological structure, a conceptual frame of reference and literary connections clearly exist between the *Apocalypse of Paul* and *Ascensio Isaiae*. The cosmic structure of the universe in both texts is very similar. The *Ascension of Isaiah* has seven heavens while the *Apocalypse of Paul* has ten. By way of comparison, both texts have a region that is hostile to the supreme deity. By way of contrast, the *Apocalypse of Paul* has seven realms dominated by a Demiurge figure which is counter to the *Ascension of Isaiah* which lacks a fully developed Demiurge character. The *Ascension of Isaiah* exhibits only the terrestrial realm as being involved in a spiritual struggle contrary to the Father and the Beloved in the seventh heaven. This realm contains demons with a hierarchy of powers. In addition, the judgment and punishment motif distinguishes the *Apocalypse of Paul* from Isaiah's vision. Instead of angels punishing a soul, the angels in the *Ascension of Isaiah* praise the One enthroned in the seventh heaven. This is the primary theme in Isaiah's celestial regions. In spite

⁹⁷ See the discussions e.g., H. Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963) 35; Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, 7–8; and Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 171ff.

⁹⁸ *The Apocalypse of Paul* V,2:23,30; 24, 1–8.

⁹⁹ The author is grateful to have had the opportunity to discuss this text with George MacRae and for his helpful insights.

of the differences, the *Ascension of Isaiah* and the *Apocalypse of Paul* are constructed upon the same basic cosmology.

The texts also seem to be closely related conceptually. The concept of ascent and transformation is strong in both narratives. Paul ascends to be changed into a spiritual being. Isaiah, on the other hand, ascends to see the unknown heavenly world and to view the hidden descent of the Beloved. Isaiah returns to share the vision with the prophets, but Paul is absorbed into spiritual reality. Isaiah is transformed as he enters each new level of the firmaments, but Paul's transformation occurs as he enters the regions beyond the old man's domain. An anti-Jewish polemic apparently underlies the old man figure in the *Apocalypse of Paul*. Likewise, an anti-Jewish tendency surfaces in *Ascensio Isaiae*. For instance, Isaiah instructs that the vision cannot be entrusted to the people of Israel.¹⁰⁰ Another passage describes how Satan aroused the people of Israel to have the Beloved crucified because they did not know his true identity.¹⁰¹ This primitive anti-Jewish propaganda is unfortunate indeed, but it is still far removed from the notion that the God of Israel should be identified with a Demiurge figure.

Other mutual literary connections attest to the relationship between the two narratives. The *Ascension of Isaiah* teaches that the angel of the Holy Spirit will lead the righteous (those who love the Beloved) through the heavenlies.¹⁰² Notably, Paul's ascension guide is called the Holy Spirit.¹⁰³ Another connection is that Isaiah's mind was taken from his body at the beginning of his vision.¹⁰⁴ This is parallel to the instruction that Paul received to allow his mind (*voūç*) to awaken.¹⁰⁵ In 2 Corinthians Paul also speaks about being "out of the body." Here both the *Apocalypse of Paul* and the *Ascension of Isaiah* relate the mind to the experience of ascent. As Paul is restrained at the entrance to Ogdoad, so also is Isaiah delayed at the threshold of the seventh heaven.¹⁰⁶ Paul looks to his guiding spirit who tells him to give the signal to the old man and then he enters Ogdoad.¹⁰⁷ This sign functions as some kind of password that forces the old man to open the gate. Isaiah, on the other hand, is given the proper garment and then his entrance is allowed. His angelic guide explains that the leader of praise in the sixth heaven delayed Isaiah until he received the proper garment. Along this same line, it is remembered that Paul

¹⁰⁰ *The Ascension of Isaiah* XI. 39.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, XI. 19.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, VII. 23.

¹⁰³ *The Apocalypse of Paul* V,2:18, 20; 19, 20–26.

¹⁰⁴ *The Ascension of Isaiah* VI. 10–11.

¹⁰⁵ *The Apocalypse of Paul* V,2:18,22; 19, 10.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 24, 1–30; *The Ascension of Isaiah* IX. 1–5.

¹⁰⁷ *The Apocalypse of Paul* V,2:23, 20–26.

orders the toll collector to open the gate of the sixth heaven.¹⁰⁸ As noted above, Paul was required to give the special signal to cross into Ogdoad. Similarly, in reverse fashion, the Beloved gives the proper watchword to enter the three lower celestial realms during his descent to earth.¹⁰⁹ The purpose here, is not to suggest a literary dependence of one of these texts on the other. However the connections between these texts suggest that they developed in a similar religious climate. It is reasonable to assume that the *Ascension of Isaiah* represents an earlier stage of religious thought than that presented in the *Apocalypse of Paul*.¹¹⁰

Ascensio Isaiae betrays earlier Jewish sources which have been employed in a Christian work. First, it should be remembered that the *Ascension of Isaiah* is an expansion of an early Jewish text no longer independently extant concerning Isaiah's tragic fate. Second, the entire cosmological system of the text can be paralleled in Jewish apocalyptic literature. Third, the concept of the Holy Spirit being an angel can also be seen in Jewish Christian sects. Daniélou and Box have suggested that *Ascensio Isaiae* was written by a Jewish Christian and as already noted this approach has much to commend itself.¹¹¹ Even though this theory concerning the authorship of *Ascensio Isaiae* is sound, it is not absolutely certain. These issues could conceivably have captured a non-Jewish writer's imagination who could have obtained Jewish sources for his work. In some ways the work resembles a targumic expansion or a free midrash loosely based upon Isaiah and it addresses matters which are related to Jewish Christian theological concerns. While admittedly these issues would also have interested some non-Jewish Christians, the combination of all these elements suggests that the final compiler of *Ascensio Isaiae* was indeed a Jewish Christian.¹¹²

The *Apocalypse of Paul* seems to have shared a common religious background with the *Ascension of Isaiah*. The *Apocalypse of Paul* has a structure that can be paralleled in Jewish Apocalyptic. The author is acquainted with some form of the *Testament of Abraham*. The mention of three witnesses in the judgment scene can be found in Jewish sources.¹¹³ But all of these elements could have come into the text second hand, through Christian influence. If one would accept

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 22, 18–22.

¹⁰⁹The *Ascension of Isaiah* X. 24–29. It should also be noted that the four sages are also put to the test, see n. 10 above.

¹¹⁰The similarities between the texts are greater than one might assume at the first examination of the texts.

¹¹¹Box, *The Ascension of Isaiah*, p. xxv; Daniélou, 12ff.

¹¹²See n. 72 above.

¹¹³The *Apocalypse of Paul* V,2:20,20–21,22; Num 35:30; Deut 17:6; 19:15; compare to *Sanhedrin* 11:1 and parallels; Matt 18:16.

the difficult challenge to try to define this influence more narrowly, the outcome would probably point to some form of a Jewish Christian theology. At least, the latent sleeping Gnostic framework in the *Ascension of Isaiah* is awakened and fully developed in the *Apocalypse of Paul*. Could the beliefs of early Jewish Christian groups¹¹⁴ have played a role in blossoming Gnostic religious thought?¹¹⁵

MYSTICISM AND THE ASCENSION MOTIF

The study of the Ascension Motif in selected Jewish, Christian and Gnostic texts suggests certain stages of development. Paul's revelations, to a lesser extent in Acts but particularly his ascent to Paradise in the third heaven, present the personal testimony of mystical experience. Even though he hears words that cannot be uttered and receives a message so significant for his own work, there is no hint of an exclusivistic esotericism in his account or that he experienced great danger in his sublime encounter. In talmudic literature, the four rabbis also enter שָׁמֶן and only Akiva returns unharmed. Isaiah, the Beloved, and Paul undergo transformation in *Ascensio Isaiae* and *Apocalypse of Paul*, whereas neither Paul nor the rabbis do in 2 Corinthians and talmudic literature.

Hence, *Ascensio Isaiae* introduces a new stage. Although an exegetical interest is prominent and the descent of the Beloved is of

¹¹⁴ Whether Jewish Christianity actually provided the matrix for Gnosticism remains an open question. Nonetheless many of the ideas of "classical Gnosticism" preceded the rise of Christianity. W. W. Combs, "Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, & New Testament Interpretation" *GTJ* 8:2 (Fall 1987) 195–212. See for instance the difference between *Eugnostos the Blessed* and the *Sophia of Jesus Christ* (*NHL*, 206–28). D. Parrot may be correct when he suggests that the version of *Eugnostos the Blessed* existed before the text was adapted to have the risen Christ teach his followers revelation in the *Sophia of Jesus Christ* (*NHL*, 206). But is Parrot correct in saying that the *Eugnostos* is free from Christian influence? The question is discussed by R. McL. Wilson, *Gnosis and the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968) 111–17. Whether the *Eugnostos the Blessed* is to be dated before the rise of Christianity or is free from Christian influence is debatable. Wilson observes, "At the very least, however, they [some seemingly Christian terms in the text] seem to demand a due measure of caution over against assertions that Eugnostos is entirely non-Christian or shows no sign of Christian influence. There is nonetheless a further possibility: is the Epistle of Eugnostos itself a Christianised version of an earlier document?" (*ibid.*, 116). See also the analytical discussion of E. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism*, 104–7.

¹¹⁵ Here it is worthwhile to quote Wilson who speaks about a possible environment that would have provided a seedbed for Gnostic thought, "At least, one could say that there existed a great variety of thought-forms and tendencies, which are generally classified in the quite vague category of Gnosis. The 'classical' gnosticism of the second century is a consequence of these currents. In an attempt to show that Gnosis had its *Sitz-im-Leben* in a Christian milieu, inspired by Jewish-Christian apocalyptic, Daniélou has rightly drawn our attention to the fact that Jewish Christianity was a factor in the development of the ideas from which a precise gnostic system was formed" (Wilson, 259).

prime importance, one discovers the motif of metaphysical transformation which is already alluded to in the Christological hymns.¹¹⁶ An angelic guide is required in order for Isaiah to make the ascent and of course such guides are well known in Jewish apocalyptic. However, in the *Apocalypse of Paul*, one enters a new phase where the mysteries and the dangers of the heavenly regions become patent. The Apostle Paul becomes involved in the conflict with the old man figure and it seems that a basic mystical experience has been used in a developing doctrine of esotericism and rebellion against the old man figure who seems to represent the God of Israel. The text emphasizes the special knowledge required to make the ascent through the hostile celestial spheres in order to join the fellow spirits. The one making the journey must know how to avoid being deceived by the Demiurge in the seventh heaven.

CONCLUSION

From this study of the heavenly ascent in mystical speculation, it is clear that the stages that make a distinction between a mystical experience and a sophisticated doctrine of esotericism can provide an instructive heuristic for further research. No doubt the exact relationship between merkabah mysticism and gnosticizing ideas in Jewish, Christian and Gnostic texts will continue to be a current issue in scholarly debate. In the very least, the present textual study suggests that the differences between these texts are of far greater significance than are the similarities.

¹¹⁶See n. 69 above.

CANON AS CONTEXT: THE FUNCTION OF *SENSUS PLENIOR* IN EVANGELICAL HERMENEUTICS

DOUGLAS A. OSS

Since the canon of Scripture is a unified literary work, the sensus plenior of a given text is simply that which emerges when the text is subjected to the light of all of biblical revelation. Thus the use of sensus plenior as a hermeneutical method does not involve allegorization or eisegesis, but involves discerning in a text all the strata of meaning that the canonical context warrants. The progress of revelation dictates that the meaning of scriptural texts became deeper and clearer as the canon unfolded. The exegete, by considering the Bible as an integrated whole, reaches a fuller understanding of individual texts of Scripture. That fuller understanding involves strata of meaning, all of which the author expressed, whether or not he intended to express them.

* * *

INTRODUCTION

EVEN a cursory reading of recent literature treating the topic of evangelical hermeneutics reveals the intensity of the debate surrounding the use of *sensus plenior* in the process of interpretation and in the construction of a systematic theology. At issue for many evangelicals is the authority of God's word and the normative significance of theology. Should the meaning of Scripture be restricted to the results of a rigid grammatical-historical exegesis? Or is there a deeper meaning that goes beyond the results of grammatical-historical analysis? If a deeper meaning exists, how does one ascertain what precisely it is? What is the relationship between the divine author's meaning and the human author's meaning? These are a few of the concerns that recently have been raised in the evangelical community with respect to *sensus plenior*.¹

¹Cf., for example, D. A. Carson, "Hermeneutics: A Brief Assessment of Some Recent Trends," *Themelios* 5 (1980) 11-20; J. D. G. Dunn, "Levels of Canonical

Since God has chosen to communicate through Scripture, one must assume that his method of communication is adequate, and therefore comprehensible. This perspective, however, does not resolve the dilemma over hermeneutical methodology, namely determining the most effective and accurate method for understanding biblical texts. It is the thesis of this article that a circumspect and judicious use of *sensus plenior* should be part of a proper hermeneutical methodology. The discussion presented below will, therefore, propose some legitimate functions for *sensus plenior* in evangelical hermeneutics. Before turning to the functional aspects of the method, however, the term needs to be clearly defined. Its diverse connotations have resulted in much confusion.

A FUNCTIONAL DEFINITION OF *SENSUS PLENIOR*

The definition offered for purposes of this discussion will be *functional* in scope. That is, it will be concerned with defining the methodological aspects of *sensus plenior* in terms of its hermeneutical role rather than with the theological or ecclesiastical aspects which so many associate with the term.²

A proper *sensus plenior*³ must be distinguished from allegory. The method does not consist of unbridled, imaginative eisegesis and

Authority," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 4 (1982) 13–60; W. C. Kaiser, Jr., "Evangelical Hermeneutics: Restatement, Advance or Retreat from the Reformation?" *CTQ* 46 (1982) 167–80; idem, *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 23–50, 131–40; W. S. LaSor, "The *Sensus Plenior* and Biblical Interpretation," in *Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation*, ed. W. W. Gasque and W. S. LaSor (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978); V. Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," *WTJ* 48 (1986) 241–79; idem, "Is Exegesis Possible? I. A Relational Perspective on Meaning," unpublished article, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Penn.; and B. K. Waltke, "A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms," in *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg*, ed. J. S. Feinberg and P. D. Feinberg (Chicago: Moody, 1981) 3–18. Perhaps the individual who is most outspoken against *sensus plenior* and in favor of the "single meaning" of a text is Kaiser. He connects meaning solely to the intent of the human author, following the hermeneutical theory of E. D. Hirsch as set forth in his *The Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1976); and *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University, 1967). Favoring a view that allows for the possibility of a divine meaning that may or may not have been a part of the human author's intention are LaSor, Poythress, and Waltke.

²For a general survey of opinion from a Roman Catholic perspective, cf. R. E. Brown, "The History and Development of the Theory of a *Sensus Plenior*," *CBQ* 15 (1953) 141–62; idem, "The *Sensus Plenior* in the Last Ten Years," *CBQ* 25 (1963) 262–85.

³My views have similarities to those of LaSor, "*Sensus Plenior*"; and B. S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970). Also, I am indebted to the foundational work of Poythress, "Divine Meaning"; idem, "Relational Perspective"; and Waltke, "Canonical Process Approach."

the reading into a text of symbolic meaning that has no biblical basis. Further, it is not some sort of mystical or supernatural revelation acquired apart from the fruits of exegesis in which a previously hidden meaning is thrust into one's awareness, nor does the method consist of reading Scripture through a previously constructed grid of systematic theology or church tradition, and thus finding in the text only confirmation of what one already believes. Finally, this method is by no means to be separated from the grammatical-historical method and the human author's expressed meaning. Nor should its results be different from or contradict the results of grammatical-historical exegesis. Rather, the two should complement one another as two aspects of a single, unified process of interpretation.

Sensus plenior, here defined, refers to the recognition of the canon of Scripture as a single and unified literary work. Because it is one book, no part of the book can be properly understood apart from the whole. Therefore, reflection on the whole of Scripture becomes a vital and central aspect in the hermeneutical process. And one's understanding of a passage will be deeper and clearer as the result of being seen in the light of the whole. This may include levels of meaning that were not part of the conscious intention of the human author, but which are included in the expressed meaning of the publicly accessible text and which are a part of the canonical context.⁴

Of course there is also diversity within the canon, and the differences among biblical writings by different human authors must be recognized. At the same time, it must be recognized that these human differences are also divine differences. In other words, God uses a multiplicity of perspectives in his communication. The harmonization of texts does not serve well if it flattens out the divinely ordained diversity. But one does need to affirm that there are no contradictions in Scripture, and thus any differences are complementary perspectives, not mutually exclusive alternatives. Harmonization needs to be balanced by an appreciation of divinely ordained diversity.⁵

Thus a biblically based *sensus plenior* considers a given text in the light of the fulness of revelation. Any deeper meaning for a text comes only from other biblical texts. Using this definition one cannot be accused of looking to a source outside the canon for the meaning of texts, nor of reading into a text something that is not there. The meaning is there by virtue of the organic relationship of the parts of

⁴I am in basic agreement with R. E. Brown, cited in LaSor, "Sensus Plenior," 270. Cf. also Waltke, "Canonical Process Approach," 8–9; Poythress, "Relational Perspective," 8; LaSor, "Sensus Plenior," 275; and Childs, *Biblical Theology*, 99–109.

⁵V. S. Poythress, *The Stained-Glass Kaleidoscope: Using Perspectives in Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, to appear) 41.

Scripture to the whole of Scripture. Diversity in the canonical context, while it must retain its independent status as a legitimate biblico-theological point of view, also gives fuller and deeper meanings to texts that are conceptually related.

From another perspective, *sensus plenior* also serves to narrow the meaning of certain texts. Partly in view here are portions of the Bible that were written early in the process of revelation. As subsequent revelation was given, the meaning of the earlier text became more and more evident. Likewise, the theological language for proper interpretation of the NT is to be found in the OT. One cannot properly interpret NT texts without taking into account the clarifying function of the OT canon. Hence, the viable options for the meaning of the text actually are reduced, not expanded. This function is the opposite of what most biblical scholars think in connection with the use of *sensus plenior*. Kaiser, for example, is opposed to any suggestion of "fuller" meaning for biblical texts. Moreover, he is opposed to methodological proposals that are of the same nature described herein. For example, in arguing against the canonical process approach of Waltke, he states:

what is it that the whole or unity of Scripture teaches that cannot be found in the individual parts by the grammar and syntax? And if we must answer that a *different sense* is taught that went beyond the consciousness of the original instrumental agent who wrote that text, then we must argue that such is not an objective *sensus plenior*. In fact, we must deny that such a different sense is scriptural at all.

He continues in the same vein,

Does not this conclusion deprive the *sensus plenior* (which is a different, not the same sense) of one of its most essential elements—its scriptural status? Therefore, we easily dismiss it as having no force, authority, or as constituting no normative status over believers.⁶

On the basis of these remarks, it appears to be the case that Kaiser has misunderstood the proposal of Waltke. In point of fact, in the very article which Kaiser cites as the source of his information, Waltke declares unequivocally,

in contrast to the normal sense of *sensus plenior* that God intended a fuller meaning in a text than that intended by the human author, the

⁶W. C. Kaiser, Jr., "A Response to 'Author's Intention and Biblical Interpretation,'" in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, ed. E. D. Radmacher and R. D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 444–45.

canonical process approach does *not* [italics mine] divorce the human authorial intention from the divine intention.⁷

If Kaiser did not misunderstand Waltke, then he is guilty of “term-shifting” with the idea of *sensus plenior*, which is defined differently by different scholars. Even though Waltke is careful to give his terms precise definitions, Kaiser shifts the discussion to his own definition of *sensus plenior* (which is based on current practices by scholars other than Waltke) and then proceeds to use it as an argument against Waltke. In either case, such a cavalier dismissal of Waltke’s proposals is unwarranted.⁸

As an alternative Kaiser submits the notion of the “analogy of antecedent Scripture.”⁹ He opines that the human author could not possibly have intended any meaning of which he was unaware and that this extends to connections of a text with other portions of Scripture. Thus, in the exegetical process, there may be no comparison with any pericope that was written subsequent in time to the passage under consideration, for the author could not have intended a comparison with a passage of which he himself was unaware. Exegesis must be restricted to explicit affirmations found in the text being exegeted and to comparisons with parallel and equally explicit affirmations in pericopes that have preceded in time the passage under investigation. Comparison with the entire canon must be reserved for summarizing and/or systematizing, but never for exegesis or as a hermeneutical method.¹⁰

⁷Waltke, “Canonical Process Approach,” 8.

⁸Kaiser, “Response,” 444–45.

⁹Kaiser, *Exegetical Theology*, 134–40; idem, “Evangelical Hermeneutics,” 176; and W. C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978) 16, 18–19, 190, 196, 219, 267.

¹⁰Kaiser, *Exegetical Theology*, 134–40; and idem, “Evangelical Hermeneutics,” 176. Cf. also D. A. Carson, “Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: The Possibility of Systematic Theology,” in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) 65–95. Carson also argues that the process of comparison between passages should be used as a final consideration rather than as a determinative part of the exegetical process. I find it peculiar that Carson takes this view while at the same time arguing for the unity of Scripture in doing theology. One should be careful to maintain the distinction between systematic and biblical theology as Carson is doing in his article. Nevertheless, if the Bible is indeed a literary unity, then comparison of conceptually related texts as a part of the exegetical process is a valuable method when determining meaning. If conceptual relationships within the canon may not be used as a source of meaning for texts, then the proposed unity of Scripture is vacuous. This use of the canonical context does not preclude a biblical theology, nor does it blur the distinction between biblical and systematic theology. As mentioned above, diversity has value and must not be harmonized to the extent of forcing biblical authors to say something that (1) they never intended to say,

Kaiser's concern that meaning be based on as objective a method as possible is certainly a legitimate one. And his proposals have many valuable insights. However, some features of Kaiser's approach need further refinement. His basic commitment to the principle of "antecedent Scripture" is one such feature. Although it is clear from his writings that Kaiser would never want man to be the autonomous authority over the text, his principle of antecedent Scripture does, in one respect, establish man's autonomy over the text. Man, rather than God, assumes the role of deciding to which areas of life the various canonical portions apply. Did not the divine author intend that each text become an integrated part of the canon (2 Tim 3:16)? Thus Kaiser, by excluding parts of the canon from the exegetical process for any given text, seems to establish man as the autonomous authority over the text. Man determines which Scriptures are in the "hermeneutical canon" and which are not.

A second and related feature consists in the consequences of this approach for meaning in texts. Meaning lies in the relationships of the parts to the whole and to one another.¹¹ Kaiser's method diminishes the larger framework of the whole canon. A fragmented exegesis that focuses only on smaller units of communication, such as words and sentences, can diminish a reader's awareness of the flow of thought as it occurs in the larger network of discourse and canonical relationships, thus causing a less accurate reproduction of a text's expressed meaning. Therefore an approach to the meaning of texts which does not consider the entire canonical framework is inadequate.¹²

For the most part the *sensus plenior* debate has centered on methodology and the consequences of methodology for the normative significance of meaning. But there is another level that is crucial to the dialogue, and that is the level of preunderstanding. Specifically, the determining factors in many of the approaches to this issue involve more fundamental perspectives on how God has revealed himself in Scripture. At this level there are certain convictions that

or (2) is not a legitimate meaning (expressed or implied) of the written text of the author. When conceptually related texts diverge in meaning, however, they may never be said to contradict one another (unless one abandons the evangelical inerrancy stance). Therefore, when comparing two such texts, one must not force the meaning of one text into the other. But the comparison of the two texts is still valuable as a part of the exegetical process in that it reveals what the text *cannot* mean. The meaning of the text cannot contradict the meaning of any conceptually related text that has a different perspective. Hence, the clarifying function of the canon is still valuable even when diversity is evident.

¹¹For a discussion of this phenomenon at the level of discourse, cf. Poythress, "Relational Perspective," especially 8ff.

¹²Ibid.

form the foundation of the present proposal for the use of *sensus plenior* in hermeneutics. Some of them have been briefly alluded to already. I turn now to a more detailed discussion of these foundational convictions.

FOUNDATION FOR THE USE OF *SENSUS PLENIOR*

When approaching a biblical text, it is impossible to separate oneself completely from all influences of culture and conditioning. Therefore, complete objectivity in the hermeneutical process is not a realistic expectation. One is never free from one's experience, questions, attitudes, values, judgments, and the like, which combine to influence one's perception.¹³ The goal, then, is not neutrality but self-awareness. The interpreter must limit and refine his preunderstanding, but he cannot leave himself behind when he dons the cloak of an exegete. With this in mind, the following convictions are proposed as a foundation for the use of *sensus plenior*.¹⁴

(1) *God is the author of Scripture and he himself is the ultimate epistemological context for understanding the meaning of Scripture.* The biblical witnesses clearly assert that God is the author of the Bible (Heb 1:1, 2; 2 Tim 3:16). This does not mean that the role of the human author is to be ignored, but simply that the meaning of Scripture is grounded in divine authorship. Furthermore, in order to understand Scripture one must first know the divine author (1 Cor 2:10–16). Thus to know God is to be in a position to understand Scripture.

Inspiration, though, does not remove the text from its historical context. Nor does it eliminate our responsibility to conduct scientific exegesis, for there can be no separation of human and divine meaning. God chose to speak through human vessels and any “fuller” meaning of a text must also account for the human level of meaning.¹⁵

(2) *Only the Bible in its canonical form is the normative and authoritative source of theological data.* With the composition of the

¹³R. Bultmann, “Is Exegesis Without Presuppositions Possible?” in *Existence and Faith*, ed. and trans. S. M. Ogden (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1961) 342–51; A. C. Thiselton, “The New Hermeneutic,” in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. I. H. Marshall (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 313–16, 323ff.

¹⁴Some of these convictions I share with Waltke, “Canonical Process Approach,” and have expanded upon the shape he gave them in his article, 9–10. Cf. also B. K. Waltke, “Historical Grammatical Problems,” in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, ed. E. D. Radmacher and R. D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 51–129.

¹⁵For a detailed analysis of the interplay between divine and human authorship and its implications for the meaning of Scripture, cf. Poythress, “Divine Meaning.”

final NT book the canon as a literary corpus was closed. These received Scriptures constitute the final literary framework for interpretation. Moreover, the meaning of the canon, as complex and expansive as it may be, was also closed when the final book was written. Although mortal man may never capture every nuance of meaning in Scripture, the possible meanings must be finite because the literary corpus is limited to sixty-six books. No assertion of tradition, modern criticism (e.g., the claims made by some that authority resides in an earlier stage of tradition-history), or new revelation can lay claim to normativity.¹⁶

(3) *The nature of progressive revelation is such that the meaning of the Scriptures became deeper and clearer as the literary corpus of the canon increased.* Earlier portions of the canon were understood more clearly in the light of Jesus Christ and the expanding canon. Try to imagine interpreting the OT without the light of the NT. The conclusions would be quite different from those reached with the NT in view.¹⁷ Likewise, the reverse of this process is true. For an interpretation of a NT text to be as clear as possible it too must be read within the framework of progressive revelation and the whole of Scripture. Indeed, without the information from the OT, significant portions of the NT would be incomprehensible (e.g., Hebrews). Progressive revelation and the formation of the canon contribute to the perspective that the Bible is a single literary work produced ultimately by a single divine author. Thus, the Bible as an integrated whole is more meaningful than its discrete parts.

(4) *The canon has an organic unity that is demonstrated in its harmony of doctrine, perspective, and faith.* Included in the harmony of perspective within the canon is a common linguistic context involving words, sentences, paragraphs, books, and the totality of a literary collection.¹⁸ It is this unity of Scripture that makes possible the task of systematic theology. And because of its unity, the canon provides a control over the possibility of whimsical interpretations staking a

¹⁶B. S. Childs has much to say in this regard in his *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979). Dunn, "Levels," 18–27, posits four levels of canonical authority: tradition-history (earlier stages of composition), final composition (the final literary form of each book), canonical (the larger group of final compositions), and ecclesiastical (dogmatics). He argues that authority resides in the final composition of each book, not in the canonical collection of the books as a whole. His reason for taking this position is to account for the abundance of diversity which he claims is present in the canon. In effect, his position is that the Bible does not present a unified theology, but a group of widely divergent theologies. Cf. also J. D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (London: S.C.M., 1977). For a representative and clearly articulated argument against the authoritative use of the canon in biblical theology, cf. J. Barr, *Holy Scripture* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983) esp. 63ff.

¹⁷Waltke, "Problems," 122.

¹⁸Ibid.

claim to canonical authority. The guarantee that Scripture is consistent and trustworthy is founded upon the consistent nature of God himself, the self-witness of the Bible, Christ's use of Scripture, and the divine content of Scripture. Therefore the canon is the legitimate source of data for systematic theology, and indeed is the very basis that makes possible the elaboration of the relationships between the whole and the parts.¹⁹ And it is precisely at this level that a normative use of *sensus plenior* functions in articulating an evangelical theology.

Diversity in the canon, however, must be acknowledged. The question is, diversity of what nature and to what extent? Dunn has argued that the extensive diversities within the canon make the meaning of a text less clear than when the text is understood as a self-contained composition. Unity arises only as the result of imposing a theological grid on the canon and reading in one's presuppositions. Dunn concludes that the Bible does not contain a unified theology, but rather that it contains diverse theologies that cannot be harmonized.²⁰ Thus he would consider systematic theology to be impossible. The problem confronting Dunn is deciding which theology should be considered to be authoritative when two or more biblical writers diverge. I disagree, however, with Dunn's assessment of the nature of the diversity. The diversity in Scripture stems from complementary modes of expressing the same truth. For example, do Paul and James really contradict one another with respect to the doctrine of justification? Or are they expressing the same truth but from perspectives suited to their own purposes? While neither author's meaning should be forced upon the other, since the diversity is divinely ordained and should be respected, neither do they contradict one another. The diversity is complementary. This explanation accounts for the data sufficiently and does not preclude the possibility of a unified biblical theology. For indeed the unity of Scripture is of paramount importance as the evangelical community moves forward in articulating a normative theology for the people of God.

The convictions set forth above form the foundation for the use of *sensus plenior* in evangelical hermeneutics. But what is its role in the actual hermeneutical process? How does it cultivate a deeper and clearer understanding of texts?

SENSUS PLENIOR AS A HERMENEUTICAL METHOD

Any discussion of *sensus plenior* as it functions in the hermeneutical process must begin with the relationship between meaning and

¹⁹Carson, "Unity and Diversity," 69–79. He presents a more detailed discussion of this perspective on the unity of Scripture with which I agree, but which goes beyond the scope of the present investigation.

²⁰Dunn, "Levels," 37–38, 42. Cf. also Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*.

authorial intent. Much of the debate surrounding the idea of a text's deeper meaning has focused on this relationship. Even when *sensus plenior* is defined as the conceptual relationships between a text and the canonical context—thus retaining a fully biblical perspective and authority—there are those who oppose it. Generally the opposition is based on a perceived separation between divine meaning and human intent. But it is clear from Scripture that the final composition of each book contains both divine meaning and human meaning (e.g., Heb 1:1–2; 2:3–4; Acts 4:25; Jer 10:1–10). Thus there can be no separation between the deeper meaning of a passage and authorial expression.²¹

One approach to the problem of meaning and authorial intent that has received much attention is that of Hirsch.²² His concern that interpretation not become just an exercise in subjectivity is a valid one. Certainly there is a “correct” meaning to be striven for which is reproducible. This meaning Hirsch identifies as the author’s intent. Whatever meaning the author intended to convey is precisely what he did convey. Furthermore, meaning in the text is fixed and unchanging, and is represented by the text’s vocabulary, grammar, and other related areas. Meaning at this level includes what is expressed indirectly and what can be legitimately inferred from the text. Legitimate inferences are said to be a part of the author’s intent.²³

All of this seems sensible enough. And when applied to biblical interpretation there should be no hesitation in affirming that what the human author intended to say is also part of God’s meaning. But it is another matter to ask whether the full meaning of the text is restricted to human intent. Is it possible that God intended what the human author expressed as well as something more? In particular, God has known from the beginning his entire plan for redemptive history. Moreover, God has always known the final shape of the canon. Thus, God had his entire redemptive plan as well as the entire Bible in view as he inspired each writer to record his portion of revelation. Certain relationships of the parts of Scripture to the whole and to one another were elements of God’s intention, but not necessarily part of the human author’s intention. Indeed, it is largely beside the point to be concerned with human authorial intention when considering these

²¹Poythress, “Divine Meaning,” provides an extended discussion of the implications of dual authorship. The separation of divine meaning from human meaning is one of Kaiser’s major concerns in opposing *sensus plenior*; see his “Evangelical Hermeneutics,” and *Exegetical Theology*, esp. 105–46.

²²Hirsch, *Validity*; see also *Aims*.

²³Hirsch, *Validity*, 51ff., 217–24. In order to account for implications which may or may not have been in the author’s consciousness at the time of writing, Hirsch introduces the notion of “unconscious intention.” Thus logical inferences can be said to partake of intentionality, albeit at the unconscious level.

kinds of connections, unless one is willing to suggest that God made each writer aware of his entire redemptive plan and of the totality of biblical revelation while he was writing! Rather, at the level of canonical relationships it is divine authorial intention and the expressed meaning of texts that is of concern. Yet one can still affirm the unity of intent and meaning between God and the human writer. The divine is inclusive of the human but transcends it.²⁴

Does this mean that a text has “multiple” meanings? The terminology itself involved in speaking of “multiple” meanings can be confusing. It could imply a view of meaning that separates the divine from the human or that postulates unrelated meanings from the same text. This is not a proper use of *sensus plenior*. Hence, the “single” meaning of a text is an important distinction for evangelicals to maintain, and here there should be basic agreement with Kaiser’s concern for the relationship between the “single” meaning of a text and biblical authority.²⁵ But the idea of “single meaning” needs further refinement.

Contending that each text has but a single meaning does not imply that meaning is a narrow, one-dimensional phenomenon. The meanings of texts are not set in concrete. The relationships of texts within the frame of the canon create deeper and clearer meanings than can be seen with a narrow “scientific” approach to exegesis. Therefore, while maintaining the view that meaning in texts does have parameters beyond which the exegete cannot go, it is also necessary to postulate that meaning in texts is multi-dimensional. The “single meaning” in a text refers to its unity of meaning, with all of its dimensions being connected to the results of grammatical-historical exegesis. The meaning of a text is that which is expressed by the discourse. Where a deeper meaning emerges as the result of reflection on either the relationships of a text to other texts or on the integration of texts into the canonical structure, it is the multi-dimensional nature of meaning that is coming to the fore. Even further reflection

²⁴Kaiser, “Evangelical Hermeneutics,” 168–76, argues for the “single” (univocal) meaning of texts, basing his argument on the premise that God would not say anything in a passage that was not part of the human author’s conscious intent. Anything else is application, not meaning. The level of awareness on the part of the human author seems to be very important for Kaiser as he attempts to defend his view that God said only what the human author said, and nothing more. In a recent work (*The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* [Chicago: Moody, 1985] 70–71), he attributes a high level of awareness to the prophets in defense of his view that human intent is the only legitimate criterion for meaning. He states, “It is as if the prophet, on receiving the divine oracle, looked out over the future horizon and was divinely enabled prophetically to see both one or more near results as well as a distinctive, but more distant climactic fulfillment, with both the near and distant results of that word so generically linked that the words possessed one meaning in a collective whole.”

²⁵Kaiser, “Evangelical Hermeneutics,” 176; *Exegetical Theology*, 23ff.

within the gestalt of the canon might result in the recognition of numerous dimensions connected to the grammatical-historical conclusion. The dynamics of the process are similar to those involved in viewing a master painting. If the painting were viewed from the perspective of its component parts (e.g., brush strokes, figures, and shades of colors), it would not have the same impact as it does when viewed as a whole. When viewed in its entirety, the integration of the colors, figures, and brush strokes constitute a structure with properties not derivable from its parts. Each component of the painting takes on even more meaning when viewed in the light of the entire structure. Yet each of the three components also has intrinsic value: brush strokes reveal the artist's level of competency with brush techniques, figures reveal his ability to express dimensions and spatial relationships, and colors express his penchant for selecting aesthetically pleasing or provocative combinations of hues. A single brush stroke thus has multiple dimensions, none of which is separable from the single brush stroke. The same phenomenon of understanding occurs when biblical discourses are integrated into the larger canonical context.²⁶

Num 11:29, in which Moses expresses his wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them, will serve as an example of integrating a text into the canonical context. This expressed desire by Moses might evoke questions with respect to how God would proceed in bringing about the fulfillment of his wish. Or one might ask whether God would ever want *all* his people to prophesy. And if God were ever to pour out his Spirit on all the people of the covenant, what precisely would happen? When this verse is read in combination with Joel 2:28–32, we see that the prophet predicts and describes a fulfillment of Moses' wish. Then the Day of Pentecost presents a deeper and clearer picture of how the realization of Moses' wish might be accomplished. We see more precisely how God could proceed to fulfill the prophecy given to Joel. More details become available with regard to the effects of the outpouring among God's people. God did indeed make the gift of prophecy potentially a gift for all his people. These, then, become strata of the grammatical-historical meaning in Num 11:29 as that meaning was expanded in Joel and then in Acts. The added dimensions of meaning are in the text by virtue of the canonical context and the nature of progressive revelation. An important observation should be made at this point with respect to the clarifying function of the

²⁶This illustration had its origins in the course entitled "Hermeneutical Foundations," conducted during the spring semester, 1986, at Westminster Theological Seminary, under the instruction of Vern S. Poythress.

canon. In this example the canonical context has actually functioned to make our understanding of the text more precise. It has eliminated some meanings and focused attention more exactly on others.

But are these canonical meanings all from the later texts while the earlier text retains its vagueness? The answer to this question must be based on one's perspective of the unity and relatedness of the canon. If one assumes that the various portions of the canon are not related, then of course the answer will be in the affirmative. Conversely, if one argues as I have, that the canon is a unified field, then the answer will be in the negative. Moreover, the methods of the NT writers are an important consideration in this matter. They did not hesitate to make these kinds of canonical connections, even to the point of combining related texts in extended citations of Scripture (e.g., 1 Pet 2:4–8). For the NT authors, the person of Jesus Christ was the final revelation that clarified all previous revelation.

When viewed in this way, it does not seem that a fine distinction is necessary between what the human author expressed in the historical situation and what God may mean in the light of later revelation. There is no “added” knowledge, only strata of knowledge already present in the canon. Thus one can affirm both the historical meaning and the *sensus plenior* without reading into the author’s expressed meaning something that is distinct from it. The expressed meaning of the text can include both. If one distinguishes at this point between the historical meaning of the text and that which is apparent in the light of later revelation, it creates problems for our understanding of certain OT promises. Specifically, if the historical meaning that is “in” certain promises is retained in a form distinct from the meaning those promises have when considered in the light of later revelation, then some of God’s promises were never fulfilled. For example, consider the promises made to David on behalf of the nation of Israel for a Davidic dynasty that would be “made sure forever” (2 Sam 7:11b–16), and for a permanent and peaceful earthly dwelling place for the nation (2 Sam 7:8–11a). In this author’s view, these promises were never fulfilled in a “literal” sense. But the *sensus plenior* in this example, which is made plain in the light of Christ, can certainly be said to reside “in” the expressed meaning of the discourse. Any claim of normativeness for the “literal” meaning creates grave problems for our understanding of God’s promises. He must have meant all along that these promises would be fulfilled in Christ, and therefore the meaning based on the canonical context must be “in” the text.

But the “literal” meaning of these promises also retained a certain vagueness until the time of fulfillment in Christ. If one reads only 2 Samuel and writings antecedent to it, the details of exactly how God would accomplish his purpose with respect to those promises

remain unknown. Only when the entire canon is read and all the elements of the progress of revelation are taken into account is the full, and one could say “literal,” import of the divine author’s expressed meaning realized. The phenomenon is similar to that which occurs when reading a novel. Not until the end of the book does one fully understand all the strands and details of the plot. And then upon a second reading of the novel certain details that were vague during the first reading become clear. The important thing is the *expressed* meaning of the author, which in terms of Scripture always must be determined in the light of the canonical strata of divine meaning.

It is yet another matter to ask whether the strata of meaning found through the use of *sensus plenior* are normative. Inasmuch as they are based on relationships between texts within the canonical context, and thus must be accepted as biblical, the answer is yes. But care should be taken to ensure that the connections one makes in this manner are legitimate. Conceptually unrelated texts should not be forced upon one another. The explicit conceptual relatedness of texts can only be determined after the texts have been exegeted and the results compared to ensure that they are addressing the same concept. Furthermore, when there are no direct conceptual parallels between two texts, but there are connections at the implicational level, one must be very circumspect in claiming normative theological value. Measuring implicit connections is more difficult than measuring the explicit results of grammatical-historical exegesis in which exegesis is the controlling method. When determining implicit connections, however, the results of exegesis are not to be disregarded. Indeed, deduced implications should be made on the basis of exegetically determined meanings of texts. It is only when texts share these exegetical implications, that relatedness at the implicational level should be pursued. Admittedly, some implicit connections are tenuous, and the perceived connections are subjective. These kinds of implicational connections should not be used in the exegetical process or in doing theology, for the controls are not sufficiently objective. The explicit connections based on grammatical-historical exegesis, however, do have a legitimate function, since the grammatical-historical method provides an objective control when comparing the relatedness of texts. Again, caution must be exercised when using the *sensus plenior* method, for in its use there is potential for eisegesis and other exegetical abuses. And while all methods have potential for abuse, *sensus plenior* may be more readily abused than some others.

The use of the OT in the NT is another area that impacts the use of this method. It would be beyond the scope of this paper to attempt any detailed discussion of so complex an issue. However, some gen-

eral observations are in order. Foremost in the relationship between the testaments is the fact of the incarnation. The OT in every respect looks forward to Christ. In Christ the entire OT covenant finds its fulfillment and perfection resulting in the promised new covenant (Heb 8:1–13; 11:39–40; 1 Cor 11:23–26). Therefore, it is necessary for the church to read the OT in the light of Christ. In addition, because the NT is the record of Christ's person and work, it is necessary also that the OT be read in light of the NT. The progress of revelation, as seen earlier, is another determining factor in NT priority.

But there is another level of communication in the NT which indicates that the church should read the OT in the light of Christ: the attitudes of the NT writers toward the OT. The NT writers did not hesitate to interpret OT texts in the light of their own context and the revelation of Jesus Christ. The precision of their exegesis is not the issue here, for they were guided by inspiration and wrote from a revelatory stance. The point of focus is rather upon their general perspective which may serve as a paradigm for the perspective of the church. That is, the NT provides a broad perspective on the canon which in some respects was not exclusively the perspective of the inspired writers. Some aspects of this NT perspective, such as reading the OT in the light of Christ, have value for exegesis today. However, this approach to the OT should not be undertaken apart from a careful exegesis of the OT text on its own merits. It is simply that the OT does not reflect its fullest meaning apart from the NT perspective of fulfillment. The later portions of the canonical context, then, are of critical importance for any study of the OT.

In like manner the NT must be read in the light of the canonical context. The NT writers saw a great deal of continuity between themselves, as participants in the covenant, and the OT participants in the covenant. Much of the theology of the NT is thoroughly grounded in the previous revelation of the OT. Consequently, the relationship can be boiled down to one of basic continuity between the testaments. This canonical relationship has profound implications for the univocal approach of Kaiser.

Another important aspect of the relationship between the testaments that provides enriched understanding of texts is to be found in the area of typology.²⁷ Typology should not be confused with allegorization which involves minuscule correspondences that are historically and biblically unrelated. Also, allegorization attempts to derive

²⁷For a more extensive analysis see the following works which are devoted to the typological understanding of the Bible: D. L. Baker, *Two Testaments: One Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1976); P. J. Cahill, "Hermeneutical Implications of Typology," *CBQ* 44 (1982) 266–81; and L. Goppelt, *Typos*, trans. D. H. Madvig (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

deeper meaning from a single text, rather than suggesting correspondences between historical events and persons which become evident against the backdrop of God's actions in history. Conversely, typology is grounded in a biblical record that presents God's activity on behalf of his people as a continuous and uniform pattern.

Typological phenomena reflect the continuity between the testaments and the integration of each component into a single literary work, written by God. But this feature of the canon is not restricted to the area of progressive revelation in which later writings (e.g., the NT corpus) reflect a typological understanding of earlier documents (e.g., the OT corpus). So pervasive is the typological structure of the canon that even the OT's understanding of itself is typological. In the OT itself certain historical phenomena and persons were understood to have both vertical and horizontal correspondences with divine ideals.²⁸ Hence the garden of Eden was perceived as a type of the heavenly paradise which was to come (Isa 9:1, 2; 11:6–9); the exodus looked forward to a future second exodus (Isa 43:16–21; 48:20–21); the wilderness experience typified yet another wilderness wandering (Hos 2:16, 17; 12:9, 10); and the prophets saw David as the type of a future king (Isa 11:1; 55:3, 4; Jer 23:5; Ezek 34:23–24; Amos 9:11).

The NT typological understanding of the OT also provides a clear picture of the integrative nature of the parts of Scripture. It reflects an unflagging effort by the NT authors to make relevant the traditions they possessed. For they saw the consistent and typical acts of God in history as their own history of promise which was now being fulfilled. The “symbols” of history were now becoming reality. Thus the NT has sweeping typological perspectives of the two Adams (Rom 5:12–21; 1 Corinthians 15), the nation of Israel (Gal 3:1–19; 6:15–16; Heb 2:16; 1 Pet 2:9–10), and Jerusalem (Gal 4:25–26; Heb 12:22; Rev 3:12; 21:2, 10). And this exemplary list is by no means exhaustive! The entire book of Hebrews is pervaded with a comprehensive typological view of redemptive fulfillment in Christ.

Furthermore, this NT typological perspective has certain characteristics that establish it as a legitimate biblical view. Most importantly, biblical typology has a christocentric focus. All former modes of salvation find their fulfillment and climax in the ultimate type: Christ. Additionally, the antitype intensifies and enhances the previous understanding of the type. That is to say, the type takes on a deeper and clearer meaning in the light of the antitype. And, as stated previously, there is a definite sense of historical continuity between the type and its antitype. In general, the OT is of a preliminary nature whereas the NT records the fulfillment.²⁹

²⁸Cahill, “Typology,” 274; Baker, *One Bible*, 243–50.

²⁹Goppelt, *Typos*, 198–205; Cahill, “Typology,” 270–73.

The experience of Christ so transformed the understanding of the NT authors that they were confronted with the need to reinterpret their theology in the light of him. So then, typology is one method of interpretation that brought a deeper and clearer understanding (*a sensus plenior*) of the OT Scriptures to the people of God. And it is grounded in more than just the historical continuity between type and antitype. It is grounded in the very perspective and understanding of the inspired writers and in the literature they produced. Now the question arises as to whether this continues to be a legitimate hermeneutical approach. If its foundation is in the canonical context the answer must be in the affirmative. Moreover, should the church reject a perspective on the OT, and indeed on all of Scripture, that was held by the biblical writers? Caution is again in order, however, for typological correspondences that are not explicitly identified as such by a biblical writer can be tenuous. Even though theology based on this kind of deeper understanding is generally normative, without a carefully considered approach to the canonical context it may become so tenuous as to move outside the parameters of the canon and thus lose its normative significance. The canonical context is the criterion for determining the validity of this aspect of *sensus plenior*. If, after a grammatical-historical exegesis is carried out on the related pericopes, a typological correspondence is determined to exist within the canon, then its significance should be recognized as canonical. However, the modern exegete is not free to move outside the canon and claim normative significance for correspondences between biblical events and modern events, for this assumes a revelatory stance.

More needs to be said, though, about the controls over the misuse of *sensus plenior* than just an appeal to the canonical context, although that is very important and actually sums up what now needs to be considered in more detail. In the process of setting forth some guidelines it may be profitable also to look at certain aspects of the grammatical-historical method that are related to the use of *sensus plenior*.

Obviously, the results of any interpretation may not contradict the clear teaching of Scripture. Therefore, in controlling the use of *sensus plenior* it is of primary importance to subject its results to the analogy of faith. The analogy of faith is quite useful as long as all portions of Scripture are given equal status in the procedure. That is, one group of "proof-texts" should not be set up as the framework through which all other texts are read. When this occurs, inevitably the theology of the proof-texts is read into the other texts, thus obscuring legitimate, divinely ordained diversities. For example, the book of James must not be forced through a Pauline grid. James gave a perspective that deserves to be heard on its own merit. The exception to this rule would be texts with "obscure" meanings. Also,

at this point in the hermeneutical process it would be healthy to receive feedback from systematic theology, although this too must not become a matter of forcing Scripture into a preunderstood grid. Nevertheless, as long as it remains subject to the results of exegesis, it is healthy for systematic theology to inform exegesis.

Since absolute objectivity is impossible to achieve, the exegete should strive for self-awareness and continually engage in self-critical reflection. When combined with this kind of hermeneutical introspection, the grammatical-historical method serves also as a control over the abuse of *sensus plenior*. Notwithstanding one's theological presuppositions, this type of exegesis generates fruitful and accurate results. It is essential for understanding what the author expressed. And the deeper meaning of a text may never contradict the results of a careful exegesis of that text. Nor may it be unrelated to the results of exegesis. Of ultimate concern for evangelicals must be the fixity of meaning in the text. The meaning of a text must not be viewed as autonomous, an atemporal object loosed from its historical conditioning and no longer under the control of authorial expression. Grammatical-historical exegesis is a key weapon in this battle against the advances of modernity with its relativistic approach to biblical norms. But fixity of meaning does not preclude a deeper and clearer meaning, so long as every stratum is viewed as a part of the fixed meaning of the text. For ultimately it was God who determined the fixity of meaning by causing the canon to be written, thereby setting the boundaries for the meanings of texts.

However, this endorsement of the grammatical-historical method is not without qualifications. "Scientific" exegesis must not be made into some sort of sacred cow, grazing on the lush grasses of objectivity while eschewing the barren pastures of subjectivity. Some advocates of the grammatical-historical method seem to understand hermeneutics as the mastery of certain principles that are then used to extract the meaning from a text as though it were an object to be uncovered in an archaeological dig. If presuppositions are properly refined, then the correct, one-dimensional meaning of the text will be revealed by means of the objective methodology. This approach is not fully satisfactory in several respects.

First of all, the "scientific" grammatical-historical method is itself shaped by the community from which it arises.³⁰ Consequently, the results of the method will be slanted toward a western mind-set. Moreover, the theology based on such an analysis will be articulated within the epistemological categories of western civilization's ratio-

³⁰P. L. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966). Berger and Luckmann show that all epistemological categories are ultimately founded in the societal values from which they arise.

nalistic and empirical world view. Such a scientific orientation makes it difficult for some scholars to accept the supernatural world view of the Bible. Others of a more evangelical orientation accept the world view of the Bible with respect to past ages (e.g., the apostolic age), but find it difficult to accept the idea of those same supernatural phenomena continuing into the present age. Perhaps certain rationalistic presuppositions concerning the nature of reality actually prevent some from accepting the supernatural perspective of Scripture. An approach such as this actually widens the gulf between the two horizons.

Second, the illusion of absolute objectivity can prevent one from apprehending all the layers of meaning that might be in a text. Therefore, the canon's function as context should be made an integral aspect of the hermeneutical process and should work hand in hand with grammatical-historical investigation. It should not be relegated to a separate and final stage of systematizing, a stage that is basically unrelated to the process of interpreting the text. Furthermore, systematic theology is determined to a great extent by hermeneutical methods, so why should the two be separated? A narrow use of the grammatical-historical method, then, does not adequately account for the canonical "iceberg."

Third, a narrow and fragmentizing exegesis can have the opposite result and reach conclusions that are too vague. Apart from the canonical context one may miss pertinent information that would have the effect of making a text clear. Thus, while the canonical context may actually reduce the viable options for interpretation and give us greater clarity, the grammatical-historical method may result in vagueness.

Fourth, the emphasis of much exegesis is still upon smaller units of communication such as words and sentences. Even when this level of exegesis is conducted in a balanced manner, the underlying assumption seems to be that theology is contained in the meanings of words and precise syntactical relationships. Thus the results tend to be atomistic and perhaps not that relevant to the larger conceptual framework. In this respect the Bible should be read "like any other book." When we read other works of literature, when we write, even when we speak, do we conduct a lexicographical investigation of every word being used? Of course not. Our awareness is focused on larger kinds of meaning. Our interpretations should also have this focus.³¹

Finally, an overly scientific methodology may cause one to miss the primary goal of hermeneutics, namely, a personal encounter with the risen Lord. The ultimate objective is not to know the meanings of

³¹Cf. Poythress, "Relational Perspective."

texts, or even the deeper meanings of texts. The ultimate objective in hermeneutics is to know Christ. This does not mean that the scholarly discipline of academic investigation must be thrown out. But that part of the process must not obscure the spiritual dimension. The Scriptures do more than communicate propositional truth; they mediate the presence and power of God to redeem man. In this respect, the Bible interprets us, and it is carnal to think that we are somehow "masters" of its meaning.

For the Bible to interpret our lives it must have some effect on us. When we have an encounter with the risen Lord it usually evokes a response on our part. And it is difficult to separate precisely our responses from the meaning of the text since one flows directly from the other. Since any effect that meaning has can generally be called application, I proceed now to consider that topic.

SENSUS PLENIOR AND THE APPLICATION OF MEANING

In the final analysis, the problem of Scripture's authority within the evangelical community is not one of articulating a doctrine of the Word of God to which all will subscribe. The real problem, it seems, is to articulate the meaning of the Bible as relevant to modern culture in a way that retains full divine authority. This is the task not only of theology in a systematic sense, but also in a pastoral sense. Any theology that lacks application is fruitless. How, then, may the *sensus plenior* of Scripture yield fruitful results in the area of application?

Evangelicals must reject the concept that the needs of modern man determine the meaning of the text and thus also its application.³² At the same time it must be acknowledged that we are "trapped" within our historical situation and there is no escape. So in one sense, sharing in the meaning of a text by way of application cannot avoid historical conditioning. Yet in the fusion of the biblical and modern "horizons," it is the modern horizon that must be subject to refinement, not the horizon of the text. Authority resides in the text, not with the interpreter.

Hirsch, whose view of meaning and intention was considered in the preceding section, has also offered a solution to the problem of application.³³ He suggests a strict separation of meaning and "significance." Meaning in his theory, as seen earlier, is what the author intended to express. "Significance" is a perception by the reader of a relationship between the meaning of a text and his own situation. Application, then, consists of these perceived relationships. An obvious weakness with this view is that a reader may perceive a relation-

³²See Thiselton, "New Hermeneutic," 303–10.

³³Hirsch, *Aims*, 95–158. Cf. also his *Validity*.

ship between meaning and his own circumstance which is not at all related to the text.³⁴ Some scholars, such as Kaiser, have appropriated the Hirschian theory of application into the hermeneutical process.³⁵ He contends that the two processes of exegesis and application must be kept separate and distinct. If application is a part of the meaning, then the meaning of a text changes with each new application. Thus, in order to protect the stability and authority of a text's meaning, he argues for separation. However, even though application is a distinct and separate item from the meaning of the text, Kaiser opines that good applications will be in harmony with the universal truth expressed by the passage.

On the surface this appears to be a logical and practical way of dealing with application. But there are problems with it. God gave Scripture for the very purpose of application through encountering Jesus Christ in the words of the biblical witness. Scripture evokes awareness of "how great a salvation" believers possess by virtue of its witness to Christ (Heb 2:3–4). The holy Scriptures also make men "wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 3:15). These are applicational characteristics of the very nature of God's Word. Since application is part of the ontological essence of Scripture, it is problematic to entertain any degree of separation between the two. It would be like trying to separate the attributes of God from the being of God. Application is an attribute of Scripture.

Furthermore, the separation of meaning and application results in the loss of normativeness for the message of the Bible. If application is not fully a part of meaning then it is not binding on one's life. Clearly, Kaiser does not wish to have application separated entirely from the text, for he contends that application should be in harmony with the universal meaning of the passage. His burden is to protect against a hermeneutical posture in which meaning does not reside in the text but only in the interpreter's application of the text. If meaning is said to reside only with the interpreter and his perceived relationships between the text and his own historical milieu, then it becomes detached from the intent of both the human and divine author. Poythress has argued correctly that this kind of strict separation is tantamount to agreeing with the view of neo-orthodoxy, which also holds to a dichotomy between the propositional content of a text and one's personal encounter (application) with the text.³⁶ But Kaiser's suggestion that application should be kept separate from

³⁴Poythress, "Divine Meaning," 4.

³⁵W. C. Kaiser, "Inner Biblical Exegesis as a Model for Bridging the 'Then' and 'Now' Gap: Hosea 12:1–6," *JETS* 28 (1985) 33–46. Cf. also Kaiser, *Exegetical Theology*, 32.

³⁶Poythress, "Divine Meaning," 17–18.

meaning may lead some to understand his position as advocating a more radical kind of separation in which application is not meaning. The danger with which he is concerned can be eliminated when one first engages in the exegetical task and then takes care to ensure that all applications are drawn from the meaning of the text. The meaning of Scripture can be appropriated normatively in the present historical context only if application is the warp and woof of the meaning. At this point one can be confident that God has foreseen every historical context, every cultural milieu, the societal mores of all generations, and each individual's personal circumstances, and that he intended the Holy Scriptures to be applied to all of them, indeed, that he has placed application within the very nature of the Bible. Application is a dimension of meaning.

If these concerns are valid, then how does one determine the applicational aspect of the meaning of a passage? And how can the interpreter be sure that his application is a part of that meaning? The illumination of the Holy Spirit is crucial in this part of the hermeneutical process. In addition to the leading of the Spirit, the use of *sensus plenior* can provide assistance in making "meaningful" applications. By exploring the canonical context, and reflecting on the relationships of a text to the whole, strata of meaning are realized which provide sound biblical parameters for application.

The example of the second commandment in Exod 20:4 will serve well. It reads, "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down and worship them." In its historical significance this commandment is probably addressing religious syncretism, or the worship of pagan deities. However, upon reflecting on the canonical context, one discovers that the concept of idolatry is expanded, and other dimensions of meaning for the commandment emerge. Eph 5:5 indicates that immorality, impurity, and greed constitute idolatrous behavior. Elsewhere as well, these three sins are identified as idols or considered as idolatrous behaviors (e.g., Col 3:5; 1 Cor 5:10; 6:9; 1 Pet 4:3). Even more profound a connection is seen in the simple command, "Keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21), where John summarizes his entire discussion concerning the things of God and the things of this world. His juxtaposition of the two realms clearly indicates that they are mutually repugnant, and so he says not to love the world or the things of the world (2:15). Functioning as a conclusion, the phrase, "Keep yourselves from idols," summarizes all that John meant when he gave the instruction not to love the world. In the light of the canonical context, then, the second commandment has far-reaching meaning in the present. The *sensus plenior* of idolatry involves giving anything or anyone higher priority

than one should in his life. To do so causes sin, and replaces the priority that God claims over one's life with a priority of one's own choosing. The applications for twentieth century man are obvious. But are they part of the meaning in Exod 20:4? Yes. The canonical relationships that have been examined are clearly strata of the meaning of idolatry in *God's* second commandment. Moreover, they are not the result of allegorization but arise from legitimate relationships established within the one book (the Bible), by the one author (God). Since one is to avoid *all* forms of idolatry according to the expressed meaning of the text, the expressed meaning must include the *sensus plenior* of "idolatry." Consequently, the meaning of the text must also include the applications arising from the canonical context, for they are part and parcel of the *sensus plenior*.

These suggestions for the use of *sensus plenior* in the application of biblical truth will, it is hoped, contribute meaningfully to the dialogue. There is certainly an urgent need for the discussion to continue. Ultimately, the normative value of Scripture for the life of God's people and the redemption of modern man is at stake.

CONCLUSION

The canonical context is a complex network of relationships so integrated as to constitute an act of divine communication with properties not derivable from its discrete parts. In other words, the Bible is a type of gestalt. Within the parameters of this gestalt are texts that have strata of meaning by virtue of their integration into the whole, as well as meaning in the light of their historical origins. The suggestion put forth in this study is that hermeneutical methodology should include both approaches to meaning, thereby obtaining as many strata of the "single" expressed meaning of the text as possible. Furthermore, by reflecting on the canonical context one is able to see applications for the modern situation that are part of the warp and woof of a text's expressed meaning. It is essential that the church receive all the meaning that Scripture has for her. This is particularly important in the light of God's purpose in giving us his Word, which is to bring us into conformity to the image of his Son.

Perhaps these proposals with respect to the use of *sensus plenior* will provide some basis for dialogue. It is hoped that all the parties concerned will continue to struggle with biblical meaning and continue to pray for the illumination of the Holy Spirit as attempts are made to articulate a prophetic word for this generation.³⁷

³⁷This article was originally prepared for the doctoral seminar entitled "Hermeneutical Foundations," at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Penn. The inspiration and assistance of Professor Vern S. Poythress are gratefully acknowledged.

THE CLASSIFICATION OF OPTATIVES: A STATISTICAL STUDY*

JAMES L. BOYER

The optative mood is relatively rare in the NT and follows usage patterns of Classical Greek. Though most NT occurrences are volitive, some are clearly potential; the oblique optative, however, does not occur in the NT. Careful analysis suggests that the optative implies a less distinct anticipation than the subjunctive, but not less probable.

* * *

THE student who comes to NT Greek from a Classical Greek background notices some differences in vocabulary, i.e., old words with new meanings and new words, slight differences in spelling, and some unfamiliar forms of inflection. But in syntax he is on familiar ground, except that it seems easier. He may hardly notice one of the major differences until it is called to his attention, and then it becomes the greatest surprise of all: the optative mood. Its surprise, however, is not that it is used differently or strangely; it just is not used much.

Many of the old optative functions, particularly its use in subordinate clauses after a secondary tense, seemingly do not occur at all in the NT. On the other hand, the optatives which do occur follow the old patterns rather closely. What changes do occur are in the direction of greater simplicity.

Grammarians have pointed out that “the optative was a luxury of the language and was probably never common in the vernacular . . .

* Informational materials and listings generated in the preparation of this study may be found in my “Supplemental Manual of Information: Optative Verbs.” Those interested may secure this manual through their library by interlibrary loan from the Morgan Library, Grace Theological Seminary, 200 Seminary Dr., Winona Lake, IN 46590. Also available are manuals of information supplementing previous articles of this series covering participles, infinitives, subjunctives and imperatives.

a literary mood.”¹ In the NT it is found almost solely in the writings of Luke and of Paul, with the more complex literary patterns in Luke. Paul’s use is almost limited to the expression of a wish. There are four instances in the epistles of Peter, two in Jude, and one each in Mark and John. Surprisingly there is only one in the literary epistle to the Hebrews.

INFLECTIONAL COMPARISONS

The optative is so rare that most grammars of NT Greek do not include the paradigms for the optative forms. The inflectional elements of the Greek verb in all the moods consist of three basic parts: (1) the verb or tense stem, (2) a thematic or connecting vowel, and (3) a set of inflectional endings indicating person and number. The optative uses the same verb or tense stems as the other moods. It adds a mood suffix (*ι* or *η*) to the thematic vowel, *ο/ε*, resulting in a distinctive *i*-sound (-οι-, -ει-, -αι- or -οιη-, -ειη-, -αιη-) before the ending. The optative uses the secondary endings in all its tenses (just as the subjunctive uses the primary endings). The actual resultant endings may be found in the major grammars.²

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION

The Optative of Wish (Volitive)

The name optative (from the Latin *optari* = to wish) points to one major use of the mood, to express a wish or a choice. It accounts for the majority of NT optatives (39 out of 68, or 57%). These may be grouped into six categories.

Mὴ γένοιτο

Best known of optative uses, and one of the most frequent,³ the phrase μὴ γένοιτο is an example of the volitive optative. In form it is a wish, “may it not happen.” But it has become a stereotyped, idiomatic exclamation indicating revulsion and indignation, strong rejection. For this reason it is given a separate classification. The common English translation, “God forbid!” (King James Version) is

¹A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934) 935–36.

²For Classical forms, see W. W. Goodwin, *Greek Grammar*, rev. by C. B. Gulick (Boston: Ginn, 1930); for NT forms see J. H. Moulton and W. F. Howard, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek, Vol. II Accidence and Word Formation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920).

³It occurs 15 times, all but one is in Paul: Luke 20:16; Rom 3:4, 6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11; 1 Cor 6:15; Gal 2:17; 3:21; 6:14.

not, of course, a literal translation (there is no word for God, and the verb does not mean "forbid"), but it expresses the sense accurately.⁴

Gal 6:14 is the only place where this phrase occurs as part of a longer sentence rather than standing alone as a two-word exclamation. In every other Pauline usage, it is an appropriate negative answer to a rhetorical question. In Luke 20:16 it is also a strong reply, this time to a threat of judgment.

This phrase indicating strong rejection is not limited to NT writers. It was used in classical,⁵ and in LXX.⁶ Some have identified it as the only remnant of the optative in modern Greek.⁷

Formal Benediction

This group and the next are actually indirect prayers, since, although addressed to someone else, they express a wish that God might do something. They are rather formal "benedictions" in which the spiritual leader, here Paul, invokes divine favor upon his readers.

Their formal character is indicated also by two somewhat standardized patterns of expression: (1) God (ὁ θεός or ὁ κύριος or both) is named first, usually rather formally described in terms appropriate to prayer, with the aorist active optative following: for example, Rom 15:5, δὲ θεὸς τῆς ὑπομενῆς καὶ τῆς παρακλήσεως δώῃ ὑμῖν. "Now the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you. . ."⁸ (2) The optative is in the passive voice, the items wished for constitute the subject, and the agent or doer is unnamed, although clearly understood as God; 1 Pet 1:2, χαρις ὑμῖν καὶ ἐιρήνη πλειθυνθείη "May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure" (also 2 Pet 1:2, Jude 2, and 1 Thess 5:23b).

Attention needs to be called here to the very large number of such benedictions in the NT where the verb is unexpressed and needs

⁴The NASB uses "May it never be!" The New King James version uses "Certainly not!" in every instance except one, where it preserves the KJV "God forbid!" The NIV uses a variety of phrases: "Not at all!" (4 times), "By no means!" (4), "Absolutely not!" (2), and once each, "May it never be!," "Certainly not!," "Far from it!," "Never!" and "May I never . . . !."

⁵W. W. Goodwin, *Grammar*, 279 (#1321).

⁶F. Blass and A. DeBrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and rev. by Robert Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961) 194.

⁷J. T. Pring, *Oxford Dictionary of Modern Greek* (Oxford, 1982) 43; Robertson, *Grammar*, 939. But others have doubted this; cf. J. H. Moulton, *Grammar of New Testament Greek, Vol. 1 Prolegomena* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1906) 240; Vincent A. Heinz, "The Optative Mood in the Greek New Testament," unpublished Master of Theology thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1962, 20.

⁸Also, Rom 15:13, 1 Thess 3:11, 12 (two optatives involved), 5:23 (first optative), 2 Thess 2:17 (two optatives), 3:5, 16; Heb 13:21. English translations are given from the NASB unless otherwise stated.

to be supplied. In most cases that verb, if it were used, would be the optative of the copulative verb, εἴη.

Non-formal Blessing

A second group of indirect prayers is less formal, expressing a wish for some specific blessing for someone else (Acts 26:29, 2 Tim 1:16, 18, 4:16) or for oneself (1 Thess 3:11, Phlm 20). In these the optative stands before the reference to the Lord, and no descriptive words are used; 2 Tim 1:16, δώῃ ἔλεος ὁ κύριος. “The Lord grant mercy” (also 1:18, Jude 9).

Simple Request

Not all wishes are specifically addressed to God; sometimes they relate to providence. Only two optatives are included in this category: 2 Tim 4:16 is a gesture of Paul’s forgiveness reflected in his wish that others will do the same; and Philemon 20 is a simple personal request. However, several of the wishes in the categories following might also be included here.

Imprecations

The optative mood can be used for an adverse wish, or a curse. Only two that use the optative are usually listed for the NT, Mark 11:4, Acts 8:20; another, Jude 9, probably also belongs here. In imprecatory sentences Classical Greek normally used the optative, but in the NT the imperative is used more often (cf. Gal 1:8, 9 ἀνάθεμα ἔστω. “Let him be accursed,” also 1 Cor 16:22 (with a colloquial form, ἥτω); in Acts 1:20, Luke uses the imperative λαβέτω instead of the LXX optative λάβοι when quoting from Ps 108[109]:8). The close kinship between the optative of wish and the imperative of command is seen also in Mark 11:4.

Permission

One example uses the optative in a passage which seems to express permission or acceptance rather than the eager hope which the English word ‘wish’ conveys. Luke 1:38 γένοιτο μοι κατὰ τὸ ῥῆμά σου “Be it done to me according to your word.” It is possible that Mary’s attitude toward the announcement she had just received may have been strong anticipation and desire, but it seems more plausible that these words express deliberate choice and willing submission on her part.

The Potential Optative

The term “potential” is used in grammar to describe action which is dependent on circumstances or conditions, that which would or might happen if circumstances are right or if conditions are met. In Greek there is a potential indicative used to express a past action as dependent on past circumstances or conditions, and the potential optative used to express such actions in the future, as well as potential uses of the subjunctive in third class conditions and deliberative questions. Usually these constructions use the modal particle $\ddot{\alpha}v$. Concerning the potential optative, the Classical grammarian Wm. W. Goodwin says,

The limiting condition is generally too indefinite to be distinctly present to the mind, and can be expressed only by words like *perhaps*, *possibly*, or *probably*, or by such vague forms as *if he pleased*, or *if he should try*, *if he could*, *if there should be an opportunity*, etc. Sometimes a general condition, like *in any possible case*, is felt to be implied, so that the optative with $\ddot{\alpha}v$ hardly differs from an absolute future. . . .⁹

The NT potential use of the optative is in accord with the Classical usage, except it is much less frequent and does not include all the facets found in Classical Greek. These have been summarized into four groups.

Potential Optative in Questions

Certainly one of the characteristics of the NT use of the optative mood is its strong tendency to occur in questions and in connection with questions. As noted above, 13 out of 15 occurrences of $\mu\eta\gamma\acute{e}vo\tau\circ$ serve as answers to rhetorical questions. Even more surprising is the fact that 20 of the 29 potential optatives in the NT occur within questions.

No indication has been found of such a tendency in older Greek,¹⁰ nor any suggestion as to the reason for and significance of this phenomenon in the NT. It may be that it is related to the basic idea of potentiality that belongs to the mood. At a time when the optative was becoming archaic and other forms of expression were replacing it in ordinary speech, the added “potentiality” which

⁹Goodwin, *Grammar*, 282 (#1327).

¹⁰H. W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ., 1976) 407–8 mentions the use of the optative in questions, but no indication is given that this is a special feature of the mood.

inherently is involved in a question may have made it more likely that the optative should survive there.

Potential Optative in Direct Questions. Two examples are found in this category: Acts 8:31 and 17:18. Both have the particle ἄν and the sense is clearly potential. They express puzzled curiosity. Like those following, they are within a quotation, but it is a direct quotation, which would require that the original forms be preserved.

Potential Optative in Indirect Questions. The difference between these and the preceding category is that they are in indirectly quoted questions rather than direct. This raises the question (to be discussed below) whether they should rather be classified as “oblique” optatives. They are grouped here, however, on the basis of their sense.

This group is the largest, with 17 examples. All but one are in the writings of Luke.¹¹ The indirect question is introduced by the interrogative pronoun τίς, τί 11 times, 8 of them¹² with the particle ἄν; by the interrogative εἰ (= *whether*) 4 times, by μήποτε (= *whether*) and ποταπός, once each. When ἄν is present the potential quality is obvious. Those introduced by εἰ are not conditional in meaning; rather they are interrogative, reflecting a direct question that is potential.¹³ Most are introduced by governing verbs which suggest the element of uncertainty and perplexity, διαλογίζομαι (3), διαπορέω (2), διαλαλέω, ἐπερωτάω, πυνθάνομαι, συζητέω. They may be subdivided into several types, illustrating different potential factors:

- (1) What does it mean? (Luke 1:29, 8:9, 15:26, 18:36, Acts 10:17)
- (2) Which of many? (Luke 1:62, 6:11, 9:46, 22:23)
- (3) Yes or No? (Luke 3:15, Acts 17:11)
- (4) Who are you? / Who is he? (John 13:24, Acts 21:33)
- (5) What will come of this? (Acts 5:24)
- (6) Are you willing? (Acts 25:20)
- (7) Shall we try? (Acts 17:27 twice)

A crucial question here is whether or not these questions would be in the optative if they were standing alone or quoted directly.

¹¹Luke 1:29, 62; 3:15; 6:11; 8:9; 9:46; 15:26; 18:36; 22:23; John 13:24; Acts 5:24; 10:17; 17:11, 27 (two optatives), 21:33; 25:20.

¹²One, Luke 18:36, has ἄν as a textual variant, as noted in Nestle’s Greek Testament, edition 26.

¹³There may be another example in Acts 27:12 if we understand the sense to be that they put to sea [to see] whether they could spend the winter in a safe harbor (the direct question involved would be “Can we possibly do it?”). But it seems better to understand it to mean that they went “thinking that they might reach . . .”, or “in order to, if possible, reach . . .” If that is the meaning it becomes an example of a parenthetic fourth class protasis.

Whether they are optative because they are potential, or because they are being quoted indirectly after a past tense main verb (i.e., oblique optatives), will be discussed below.

Potential Optative in Protases

There is no complete example in the NT of the Classical Future Less Vivid condition (often referred to as fourth-class conditions), which used the potential optative in both the protasis and the apodosis. In a few places, the protasis uses the potential optative, but the apodosis does not follow the pattern. Either it is incomplete, with the verb left to be understood (1 Pet 3:14, 17), or it takes a different form (Acts 24:19), or it is totally absent (Acts 20:16, 27:39, 1 Cor 14:10, 15:37).

One group poses no problem of identification: some form of the verb εἰμί is to be supplied and the whole is a mixed condition. If, as is likely in 1 Pet 3:14, the indicative ἔστε is supplied, the fourth-class protasis is combined with a first-class apodosis. In 1 Pet 3:17, if an indicative ἔστιν is supplied, the result is the same. If, as is presumably possible, an optative εἴη is supplied, it becomes a full fourth-class condition. In both cases, the optative in the protasis is a potential optative.

Acts 24:19 has a potential optative in the protasis, and an imperfect indicative in the apodosis, ἔδει. Classical grammar provides a suggestion: "The imperfects ἔδει, χρῆν or ἔχρην, ἔξην, εἰκὸς ἥν, and other impersonal expressions denoting obligation, propriety, possibility, and the like, are often used without ἀν to form an apodosis implying that the duty is not or was not performed, or the possibility not realized."¹⁴ Thus ἔδει, even without ἀν, is in effect a potential indicative and this example comes close to being a full fourth-class condition.

Another group is quite different. There is no apodosis, nor is one to be mentally supplied. The sentences are not conditional sentences at all. In each case a brief stereotyped phrase¹⁵ in the form of a protasis is attached almost as a parenthesis to some element of the sentence, not to the sentence itself. This seems especially clear in 1 Cor 14:10 and 15:37, where εἰ τύχοι is translated "perhaps" in

¹⁴Goodwin, *Grammar*, 297 (#1410a).

¹⁵Horn several times calls attention to the frequent appearance of the optative in set phrases or expressions; "The optatives that do occur frequently (wishes, potential, possible protases) occur for the most part in certain well defined phrases and expressions", and "certain fixed phrases occur, some of which . . . are rather parenthetical." (R. C. Horn, *The Use of the Subjunctive and Optative in the Non-Literary Papyri*, Westbrook Publ. Co., [Philadelphia, 1926] 143, 161).

NASB; “it may be” and “it may chance” in KJV; literally, “if it should turn out so”. The other examples are very similar. In Acts 20:16 the phrase *εἰ δύνατον εἴη* does not go with *ἔσπευδεν* (“he was hurrying if he were able”), but with *γενέσθαι* (“he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible”). In Acts 27:39, essentially the same phrase, *εἰ δύναιντο*, goes with *ἔξωσαι* (“they resolved to drive, if they could, the ship onto it”). Probably Acts 27:12, using the same phrase, belongs here also (cf. footnote 13). In all these the optative is potential.

The Oblique Optative

One of the commonest of Classical usages of the optative was the change of the mood of a verb in a subordinate clause from indicative or subjunctive to optative following a governing verb in a secondary or past tense, or the change to optative when the sentence was included in indirect discourse after a secondary tense. This use has been referred to by various terms;¹⁶ here it will be called the Oblique Optative.

The almost total absence of this construction in the NT may in part reflect that in the NT, direct discourse is preferred over indirect, and that even in the Classical the change was not required. It is apparent that the general decline of the optative was more severe in this usage than in the volitive and potential. This is not surprising, for the extreme complexity of the practice, as reflected by the multiplicity of “rules” generated by the Classical grammarians in their effort to describe it, would have tended toward its abandonment.

In discussing this usage Blass-Debrunner includes the examples listed above under the heading, Potential Optatives in Indirect Questions. It is true that indirect questions could in Classical Greek use this oblique optative. The optative then could be representing an indicative or subjunctive in the direct question. But an examination of the actual examples points strongly to the conclusion that the optative is what we should expect in the original question. Blass-Debrunner recognizes this in at least some of the examples, saying “[Luke’s] examples usually have ἦν with the optative and accordingly correspond to the potential optative of the direct question.”¹⁷ Robertson expresses the same evaluation, speaking about Acts 17:18,

¹⁶Blass-Debrunner (*Grammar*, 195) calls it the Oblique Optative. Several grammarians, for example, Robertson (*Grammar*, 1030), Smyth (*Grammar*, 379), Goodwin (*Grammar*, 314), refer to it as Optative in Indirect Discourse. This designation, however, only partially describes the practice, which includes not only clauses in indirect discourse but many other subordinate clauses after secondary tenses, and is therefore somewhat misleading.

¹⁷Blass-Debrunner, *Grammar*, 195.

"Why not rather suppose a "hesitating" (deliberative) direct question like *τί ἀν θέλοι ὁ σπερμολόγος οὗτος λέγειν*; . . . As already remarked, the context shows doubt and perplexity in the indirect questions which have *ἄν* and the opt. in the N.T."¹⁸ If that is the case they should be so classified, rather than assigned to the oblique category. The same may be said of all the examples, as has been shown in the discussion above.

Aside from these indirect questions there is only one other example claimed of the oblique optative. It is in Acts 25:16, involving two optative verbs in a temporal clause after a secondary tense, thus in form fitting the definition of the oblique optative. But again, it need not be so if there is reason to think that the mood would have been optative in the direct form. Here again Classical grammar helps. *Πρὶν* was used with an infinitive chiefly when it meant *before*, and when the leading clause was affirmative. It was used with the indicative, and with the subjunctive and optative only after negatives.¹⁹ Several examples are given where *πρὶν* is followed by the optative. So it is possible that the optative verbs after *πρὶν* are not the oblique form, but the original form. The potential character of the sentence is obvious. It should then be listed as the only example of another category, Potential Optative in Subordinate Clauses.

Therefore, it may be concluded that there are really no oblique optatives to be found in the NT. All the possible instances are explainable as potential optatives apart from the fact that they occur in a subordinate clause after a secondary tense.

DEGREES OF POTENTIALITY

The concept of degrees of potentiality has been discussed elsewhere²⁰ as it relates to the comparison of third and fourth class conditional sentences. There the claims and comments of the grammarians on the concept in general as well as its application to that specific question were reviewed. That discussion is assumed when application of it is made to the optative mood and its two major NT functions.

The optative is generally, and properly, called a potential mood, as are also the subjunctive and the imperative. It speaks of something as being contingent, depending on conditions or circumstances, involving some degree of uncertainty or doubt. The problem arises when the choice of moods is made whether some well-defined scheme

¹⁸Robertson, *Grammar*, 940.

¹⁹Goodwin, *Grammar*, 311 (#1485 a., b; #1486 b.).

²⁰See James L. Boyer, "Third (and Fourth) Class Conditions," *GTJ* 3 (1982) 167-70.

of graduated degrees of potentiality is reflected, so that the subjunctive becomes the mood of probability, the optative of improbability. As the earlier study showed, the subjunctive in third class conditions does not fit into any such pattern, but rather runs the whole spectrum from certainty to impossibility with the vast majority showing no indication at all as to probability. The same is also true with the optative. There are degrees of potentiality *within* the moods, but not *between* the moods.

Goodwin's comment on the potential optative cited above²¹ continues:

The potential optative can express every degree of potentiality from the almost absolute future . . . to the apodosis of a future condition expressed by the optative with ḥv. The intermediate steps may be seen in [a number of] examples. . . ."²²

He uses almost the same words to describe the potential indicative:

The potential indicative may express every degree of potentiality from that seen in [# 1336: 'what would have been likely to happen, i.e., might have happened (and perhaps did happen) with no reference to any condition.] to that of the apodosis of an unfulfilled condition actually expressed. . . . The intermediate steps to the complete apodosis may be seen in [a number of] examples. . . ."²³

As indicated elsewhere, this same latitude is present in the subjunctive third class conditions and in other uses of the subjunctive as well. Also, the imperative expresses ideas ranging from commands to requests, from ultimatums to permissions.²⁴

Thus, degree of potentiality is a factor within all the moods, but it is not a distinguishing factor between the moods. It is not correct to say that the subjunctive is "more probable" or that the optative is "less probable." The mood used does not in any sense indicate how confident one can be that something will or will not happen. A fairer explanation of the distinction is to be found in the terminology used in Classical grammars to distinguish between conditional protases with the subjunctive and with the optative, calling them respectively "Future More Vivid" and "Future Less Vivid."²⁵ The distinction is not in an evaluation of the degree of potentiality, but in the distinct-

²¹Footnote 9 above.

²²Goodwin, *Grammar*, 282 (#1328).

²³Ibid., 284 (#1339).

²⁴See James L. Boyer, "A Classification of Imperatives: A Statistical Study" *GTJ* 8 (1987) 36–40.

²⁵Goodwin, *Grammar*, 298–99 (#1418); Smyth, *Grammar*, 522–23 (#2322). Smyth expresses it especially well: "The difference between the More Vivid Future and the Less Vivid Future, like the difference between *if I (shall) do this*, and *if I should do*

ness and vividness with which the speaker or writer chooses to express the potentiality.

ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF EXPRESSING A WISH

While one of the most common uses of the optative is to express a wish, it should not be concluded that this was the only, or even the most common, way of doing so. It is beyond the scope of this article to examine these other ways, but it may be helpful to mention some of them. Particularly, it will be helpful to compare NT Greek with the Classical patterns to see what changes actually occurred.

One very obvious way to express a wish is a simple statement using the word "wish" or "want" or "desire." Many NT wishes are expressed by using the verb θέλω or βούλομαι. These words are capable of expressing many degrees of appeal to the will, from the slightest expression of hope or desire (as the English word "wish" does) to a strong request or demand.

There was a tendency in NT Greek to use the imperative mood where the older Greek would probably have used the volitive optative. For example, in imprecations or adverse wishes, for which the Classical used the optative, the NT sometimes substitutes the imperative: Gal 1:8,9 ἀνάθεμα ἔστω "let him be accursed," also 1 Cor 16:22. In Acts 1:20 the imperative λαβέτω is used in quoting from a text which in the LXX (Ps 108[109]:8) had the optative λάβοι.

ὅφελον with the indicative is used four times in the NT to express a wish, in a construction which in Classical used an infinitive instead of an indicative following.

The protasis of a conditional clause, with the apodosis omitted, may be a way of expressing a wish, as in Luke 19:42 εἰ ἔγνως . . . , "If you had known . . . !"

this, depends on the mental attitude of the speaker. With the Vivid Future the speaker sets forth a thought as prominent and distinct in his mind; and for any one or more of the various reasons. Thus, he may (and generally does) regard the conclusion to be more likely to be realized; but even an impossible (2322c) or dreaded result may be expressed by this form if the speaker chooses to picture the result vividly and distinctly. The More Vivid Future is thus used whenever the speaker clearly desires to be graphic, impressive, emphatic, and to anticipate a future result with the distinctness of the present.

"The Less Vivid Future deals with suppositions less distinctly conceived and of less immediate concern to the speaker, mere assumed or imaginary cases. This is a favorite construction in Greek, and is often used in stating suppositions that are merely possible and often impossible; but the form of the condition itself does not imply an expectation of the speaker that the conclusion may *possibly* be realized. The difference between the two forms, therefore, is not an inherent difference between *probable* realization in the one case and *possible* realization in the other. The same thought may often be expressed in either form without any essential difference in meaning. The only difference is, therefore, often that of temperament, tone or style."

Eῖθε, a dialectic variant of εἰ and εἰ γάρ, which was used in Classical Greek with the optative to express a wish, is not found in the NT.

CONCLUSION

Of the 28,121 verbs in the New Testament there are 68 optatives, less than one quarter of 1%. The optative had practically disappeared from the common language, and only later received a temporary revival by Atticizing purists who were attempting to restore the literary language of Greece's golden age. Why did it appear at all in a book written in the κοινή of the people? It is a needless question, and probably unimportant. But Turner²⁶ makes a very interesting suggestion:

. . . the old potential optative—admirably suited to Christian aspiration and piety! Indeed, one must not reject too lightly the possibility that the optatives in the NT owed their preservation in some measure to their incidence in the pompous and stereotyped jargon of devotion. These optative phrases are decidedly formal. . . . The retention of the optative at a time when everywhere they were diminishing need not surprise us in view of their value for the liturgy, Jewish [in the LXX] and Christian.

²⁶Nigel Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. 3; Syntax (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963) 131–32.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands, by Barry J. Beitzel. Chicago: Moody, 1985. Pp. vii + 234. \$29.95. Cloth.

Although this atlas joins more than a score of others published between 1945 and 1985, it is one of the best. The author's stated purpose is to demonstrate that God "prepared the Promised Land for His chosen people with the same degree of care that He prepared His chosen people for the Promised Land" (p. xv).

The atlas is divided into three major sections. First, Beitzel describes the topographic and environmental features that figure prominently in the land: geography, topography, geology, hydrology, etc. Second, Beitzel unfolds diachronically the events that have transpired in the Holy Land that are especially conducive to a geographic explanation. He treats the Patriarchs as historical personages, accepts an early date for the Exodus, and regularly sets the historical events within the larger context of the world of that day. Third, he briefly describes the history of biblical mapmaking.

Several features add to the value of this atlas: an index of all maps and figures, a comparative timeline spanning 10,000 B.C. to A.D. 100 (comparing Egypt, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Syria, Asia Minor, and Greece/Rome), three indices, an alphabetical map citation index, a Scripture index, and an extra-Biblical literature index.

The careful weaving of maps and figures throughout the text of the volume places it between atlases that are primarily collections of maps and those that are, for the most part, running text. To assist the reader, a red number appears to connect an important geographic reference mentioned in the text with the correct location on the relevant map. Also, great pains have been taken (pp. xvi-xvii) to use several color shades in the historical maps. This use of carefully chosen colors helps to clarify otherwise complicated episodes.

The major shortcoming of this atlas is the brevity of the bibliography. Even though it is only intended to provide a select citation of prominent works in the field of biblical geography, a student desiring to dig deeper into certain areas must look elsewhere for any significant bibliographical assistance.

The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands is a well-rounded atlas providing a good combination of text and illustration. It would be a potential text for a college-level Bible geography class and surely would be an excellent reference tool to add to one's library.

MICHAEL A. GRISANTI
CENTRAL BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

1 Kings, by Simon J. DeVries, and *2 Kings*, by T. R. Hobbs. Word Biblical Commentary. Waco: Word, 1985. Pp. lxiv + 286 and xlvi + 388. \$18.95 ea. Cloth.

The appearance of the two volumes on Kings in the Word Biblical Commentary series authored by two prominent Old Testament scholars provides an interesting contrast in hermeneutical approach. DeVries, the author of the volume on *1 Kings*, attaches great importance to a critical examination of the text in order to understand not only the processes by which the present text has been compiled but also its original life setting. Accordingly, DeVries presents the results of his painstaking labor in both the MT and the various Greek witnesses. The book is therefore a valuable repository of data relative to the reading of the text.

DeVries also is very concerned about sacred history and background matters. Following brief discussions of the geographical, cultural, political, and religious situations represented in *1 Kings*, DeVries centers his attention on matters of sacred history as a guide to understanding the composition of the book. DeVries finds two underlying tenets to biblical history that differentiate it from the religious myths of the surrounding cultures: (1) the belief in a transcendent monotheism, and (2) the belief in a God who was an authentic person.

Israel's amazing achievement was a transcendental theology by which it approached God as a single, whole, complete, and sovereign Person. Though Lord over all things, his personhood was not caught up in any of them. He refused to be caricatured, distorted, diluted. He refused to be used or manipulated, like a thing. He refused to allow any aspect of his being to be taken as its whole (pp. xxxi).

Further, Israel could and did see itself not in terms of being an heir of a mythological past but a people uniquely chosen by a personal God who acts in history.

DeVries contends that although *1 Kings* meets every standard of being a genuinely historiographic document, it is nonetheless a prophetic book that "was written by men who wished to bear testimony to Yahweh's self-revelation in historical event" (p. xxxv). Thus, its readers must learn to read it as such and to distinguish carefully between *historicity* (factual occurrence and accurate reporting) and *historicality* (self-awareness in historical existence). It is evident that much of the narrative in *Kings* belongs to the latter category. For DeVries, it is a misconception to judge *Kings* by modern standards of what constitutes history; although one need not be overly skeptical of its factualism, its readers must remember the literary genre to which it properly belongs. For example, *1 Kings* 17–22 is best understood as "prophet legend/story" whose function is didactic and inspirational, rather than being designed simply to record information.

The important point to remember is that the aim of these stories is less to record what God *has done* (historically, at one particular time and place), than to declare what God *can do* (throughout history, in every time and place). The prophet stories must be studied, then, for what they teach, not simply for what

they tell. The telling is an imaginative technique but the truth taught is profoundly theological (pp. xxxvi–vii).

This leads DeVries to evaluate 1 Kings as a literary composition and use a form-tradition-redaction critical method for determining the various layers of composition that eventuated in the final work of the deuteronomistic school.

Since the work as a whole is a part of the deuteronomistic history, composed most probably by a contemporary of King Josiah and revised by a member of the same school living during the Babylonian exile, ca. 550 B.C., we are dealing with a period of perhaps four hundred years for all the materials in 1 Kgs to have been selected, reshaped, and made to assume final literary form—final, that is, apart from isolated glosses of comments that are even later than the work of the (second) deuteronomist . . ." (pp. xlii–iii).

The investigation of the proposed sources at the deuteronomist's disposal and the isolating of supposed personal editorial intrusions enable DeVries to see the dominant tenets of deuteronomistic theology (pp. xlvii–viii) and to conclude: "So central and persistent is Dtr's mention of the continuity of the Davidic dynasty that no careful reader can doubt that this is his major theme" (p. xlviii).

Following some summary remarks on the various types of source material available for the deuteronomist and the isolating of certain "post-deuteronomistic expansions" (pp. xlix–lii), DeVries applies his principles in the commentary proper, which is set in the familiar format for the *WBC* series. His translations and text critical notes, and the accompanying bibliography to each section, show a thorough acquaintance and interaction with the text and its problems. Applying his methods, he finds: 1 Kings 1–2 to be part of the throne succession document that begins at 2 Samuel 9 (p. 8); 1 Kgs 3:1–11:13 to have its basic source in the Book of Solomon's Acts; 1 Kings 12–16 to be accounts of the two kingdoms up to Ahab's time drawn from various sources; and 1 Kings 17–22 to be a collection of prophet stories from the time of Elijah.

Although DeVries has demonstrated his fine acquaintance with the material of 1 Kings, the end product is somewhat unsettling. Literary forms are consistently used to give a clue to the life situation, which is then used to interpret the form and its meaning, a process that is at best hypothetical and certainly circular. The proposed grid of the deuteronomist's theological perspective is spread upon the text to discover both the compilation process and the purposes for the book's composition. The resultant "historicality" of the editor's perspective frequently leaves open the historical trustworthiness of the section in question (e.g., pp. 48–50, 121–23, 148–49, 226–27, 266–70). Entirely too often, DeVries leads his readers on a tortuous quest for imagined source documents and settings only to return with a patchwork of assorted threads that have become unraveled from the larger fabric. Indeed, the whole process flies in the face of a growing consensus of research that deals with biblical narrative not as an aggregate of disjointed sources but the product of the conscious effort of a skilled narrator who has composed the entire literary piece. Further, despite his early statement of high regard for the Scriptures (p. ix), DeVries's reference to "Israel's amazing achievement" in theological

perspective (p. xxxi) and his belief that much of Kings was not intended "to be taken as literal historical records" (p. xxxvi) leave the reverse impression. Rather than being viewed as man's achievement formed purposefully without regard to historical accuracy, Kings (and the Scriptures as a whole) needs to be studied as a trustworthy account of God's revelation. Despite the evident piety of the author, this commentary does not provide spiritual insight for the pastor or general reader and that was apparently not its purpose. For scholars, however, it is an important study on the text, sacred history, and composition of 1 Kings.

It is both refreshing and enlightening to turn to Hobbs's commentary on 2 Kings. It is, as the words of the book jacket proclaim, a "commonsense examination" of 2 Kings. After some general observations relative to the organization of 2 Kings and to the author's concern for cultic matters, the role of prophecy, and the importance of Torah, Hobbs gives his reasons for believing that the books of Joshua through 2 Kings were written by one author, the "deuteronomist" (so named because he uses the book of Deuteronomy "as a model standard of behavior for people and kings and continually refers to its legislation" [p. xxiv]). Hobbs urges the reading of 2 Kings as the product of a skilled author "whose intention was to tell the story of the failed experiment of monarchy in Israel and Judah, and to interpret that failure" (p. xxvi): the writer "has crafted a work with remarkable skill and perception, and in the execution of that task he has employed a variety of literary techniques" (p. xxvi). Hobbs then discusses the author's literary techniques (pp. xxvii–xxx), the historical sources at the author's command, and suggests that 2 Kings was probably written in Babylon during the exile in order to stress to the exiles the importance of recognizing the reasons for God's judgment. The deuteronomist was calling the people to turn to God and his law in order that the benefits of the Davidic Covenant might once again be realized (pp. xxx–xxxvii; cf. pp. 103, 282). The introduction closes with a consideration of chronology and text, and an excellent bibliography.

Throughout the main portion of the commentary Hobbs remains true to the thesis that the author of Kings is concerned to show the reason for the tragedy of the fall of Jerusalem that led to the exile: Israel's apostasy and disobedience both to the law of Moses and God's prophets. While Hobbs never loses sight of the theme and its development in Kings (note his treatment of Kings in terms of plot and counterplot, p. 34), he interacts at every stage with matters of critical concern and with the viewpoints of others. He also introduces several helpful excursus on critical issues (pp. 1–4, 25–27, 39–41, 62, 156–58, 184–85, 204–5, 260–62).

The result is a commentary that evidences a careful employment of critical tools in an effort to examine Kings in its proper setting as a complete literary production. Although some evangelicals will not always agree with Hobbs's conclusions (e.g., that the "deuteronomist" wrote all of Joshua–Kings, pp. xxiv, 325; that one ought not to discuss the "historicity" of the prophets' miracles, p. 54; cf. pp. 49–58, 292–93; that Hezekiah's prayers were "rather self-serving," p. 290; and that the conflicting details in the accounts concerning the death of Josiah in 2 Kgs 23:29–30 and 2 Chr 35:22–25 are

"obvious and irreconcilable," p. 340), it is clear that this is a serious commentary that presents its readers with the polished efforts of an author who, in reaching his conclusions concerning the text of Kings, has skillfully balanced the data of grammar, history, literature, and theology. Further, unlike similar commentaries aimed at a serious scholarly audience, Hobbs's book reads well. It leaves the reader with a sense of the flow of thought of the text that is being considered.

Again, this commentary lacks personal and spiritual application, but the fault may lie with the formal agenda of the series rather than the author. Scholarly commentaries seldom get practical. Devotional commentaries rarely get serious with the text. It is perhaps time for a series that will provide for its readers the fruits of solid scholarship blended together with spiritually perceptive insight as to how God's revealed truth can be realized in the life of the individual believer.

RICHARD PATTERSON
LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament, by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987. Pp. 219. \$17.95. Cloth.

With this book Kaiser continues his series of "Toward . . ." books, all very stimulating and helpful (see *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, Zondervan, 1978; *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, Baker, 1981; and *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, Zondervan, 1983). Kaiser is a seasoned scholar—the kind who should author such a book. In it he covers important critical, exegetical, and theological territory under three main headings: the Old Testament and Scholarship, the Old Testament and Theology, and the Old Testament and Life.

The number of topics Kaiser broaches requires that they usually be treated in a summary manner. This, of course, renders him vulnerable to being either misunderstood or criticized for not covering this or that aspect of a subject. Kaiser himself has dealt with many of the topics in greater depth elsewhere, and the copious references to his other books and articles should be understood in this light, not as hubris. This review omits the picky bantering to which such a book might be subjected and, instead, focuses on substantial exegetical and theological issues. But in light of the breadth of the book, comments must be selective.

The intended audience of the book is "not only scholars but also the whole church" (p. 11). Although it is debatable whether "laypeople" will generally be able to follow many of the discussions found in the book, Kaiser's stated desire to communicate on that level must, nevertheless, be taken into consideration. Truly technical discussions are not to be expected, and a certain amount of overstatement is allowable if it is not misleading.

With regard to the latter point, there are occasions where Kaiser's assessment of the situation, whether in terms of exegesis or application of the text, is overstated to the extent of being misleading. For example, his first

chapter is entitled “The Old Testament as *the Christian Problem*.” He discusses the significance, historical development, theological ramifications, and New Testament evidence of the centrality that the Old Testament holds in terms of problems in the church and in the Christian life. Similarly, Kaiser seems convinced that the reason the church has not taken an adequate stand against the evils of modern society (e.g., abortion, poverty, injustice) is because of a lack of familiarity with the Old Testament (see, e.g., pp. 184 and 190).

This understanding of the lack of ethical backbone, however, seems overly cognitive. Rather, the problem finds its roots in the *general anemia* of the American church. Likewise, to focus the problems of the church on the Old Testament seems farfetched. Of course, the lack of depth in spiritual understanding and concern, caused partially by the lack of concentration on the character of God as found in the Old and New Testaments, contributes significantly to the anemia. Other factors are the spiritual blindness caused by worldly affluence, the influence of the humanistic mindset in the church, etc.

Our author is certainly well known for following Willis Beecher in focusing attention on “Promise” in the Old Testament. He assigns it the central position in Old Testament theology and in chapter 4 gives a summary and support for this view. But other centers have been suggested, while some scholars have questioned even the validity of attempting to find such a center. Kaiser claims that his is an inductively derived center, but one wonders whether it is more assumed, especially since he himself admits that it is selective and since he is unable to adequately relate whole sections of the Old Testament to its presumed center (see, e.g., the critique in Gerhard F. Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, revised and updated, Eerdmans, 1982, pp. 55–58). “Promise” is certainly a very important theme in the Old (and New) Testament, and Kaiser has carefully articulated it. However, he has not established that it is the theological center of Old Testament. Even the criteria for defining a center are in doubt.

In an extended discussion of canon and critical methods, Kaiser asks whether the Christian should believe in a future (or present day?) restoration of Israel to her land as a part of the prophetic promise. His conclusion is: “To delete restoration to the land from the promise-covenant of God and to superimpose the NT over the OT would be to form a canon within a canon” (p. 58). Though Kaiser’s arguments and conclusions are valid, his discussion of the conditionality of the covenant is inadequate (pp. 50–51, see also pp. 151–55). It is doubtful that the ancients could have conceived of a covenant between volitional beings that did not have conditions attached.

In a discussion of the promise-plan of God, Kaiser’s analysis of prophecy from the perspective of what he has called elsewhere, “generic prophecy,” is very well stated (see pp. 103ff.). However, his discussion of the Old Testament sacrifices as subjectively but not objectively efficacious is not adequate (pp. 133–35). Sacrifices functioned on the level of the particular covenant to which they were attached. On the one hand, the Mosaic covenant held no promise for eternal life (see, e.g., Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28) and, therefore, neither did its sacrifices. On the other hand, the New Covenant in Christ does indeed hold promise for eternal life, and that is the level on which Christ’s sacrifice functions for those in the household of faith.

Kaiser also discusses the importance of the Old Testament for Christian living and preaching. His discussion of how to derive principles from the law that will apply to the Christian life is very useful (pp. 155–66). However, it is surprising that he did not rely more heavily upon such New Testament passages as Matt 22:34–40 (and parallels), John 13:34–35, Rom 13:8–10, 2 Cor 3:5–6, Gal 5:13ff., etc. Also, he did not deal with the relevance of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) for the church as it relates to the Old Testament law, overlooking the notion that having the law written upon the heart (Jer 31:33) is the same as living it from the heart as explained in Matt 5:20ff.

Kaiser concludes his book with a rousing exhortation that the Old Testament be taken seriously in the church for its own good and for the cause of Christ. His appeal is for careful reflection through the major issues of Old Testament and Biblical theology and their relevance for the church and Christian life.

Though this book can be criticized at various points, its value is not diminished, for it reflects firsthand experience in the Hebrew text, in-depth theological thinking, and serious application of the text to the Christian life and the church. Every theological student and pastor will derive great benefit from reading it seriously.

RICHARD E. AVERBECK
GRACE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Introducing the New Testament, by John Drane. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986. Pp. 479. \$19.95. Cloth.

Readable, thorough, balanced, and evangelical is a rare combination of features in the textbook market. But Drane's volume deserves each of those designations and more. Though the majority of the material was previously published in three volumes, *Jesus and the Four Gospels*, *Paul* and *The Life of the Early Church*, this expansion and combination into one should be welcomed in evangelical circles.

A casual glance at *Introducing the NT* might leave the impression that this is a book for a general reading audience. In this case, contemporary photographs and charts, wide margins, and an excellent layout do not indicate that the accompanying text is superficial and simplistic. Though this book will have some appeal to lay readers, it will not shortchange serious Bible students at the undergraduate or seminary level.

Part of Drane's accomplishment is the uniqueness of his approach to NT introduction. Unlike surveys of the NT, Drane carefully addresses matters of critical introduction while providing a solid overview of the contents of the NT. Unlike introductions to the NT, his discussion of technical questions is never tedious and is in language students can readily grasp. And beyond what surveys and introductions normally provide, Drane has summarized and evaluated key portions of current scholarly research on the NT, an important feature especially at the graduate level. Drane also incorporates relevant topics from the Greco-Roman-Jewish culture of the first century.

A selection of the topics covered by Drane will indicate his commitment to facing the issues: Was John [the Baptist] a member of the commune at Qumran? Did the Jews condemn Jesus? Why do the [Gospel] accounts differ? Fact and faith about the resurrection; Did Jesus intend to found the church? Identifying the authentic words of Jesus; Paul and the mystery religions; Did Paul write 2 Thessalonians? Did Paul really believe in freedom? The ‘communism’ of the early Jerusalem church; Who wrote 1 Peter? The “Apocalypticists.”

Though Drane can be praised for his thoroughness, an instructor will find some topics that need to be supplemented in the classroom, depending on the level of the course; $\lambda\circ\gamma\circ\sigma$ in John 1, redaction criticism, canon criticism, and textual criticism are treated briefly by Drane but will probably deserve a more thorough treatment. On the other hand, the instructor will discover that provocative and productive discussions will be stimulated by reading what Drane does include.

Introducing the New Testament is also helpful as a demonstration of a defense of an evangelical view of Scripture. Not intimidated by difficult problems or by the most serious challenges to the NT, Drane interacts dispassionately with historical and theological questions about the NT: his open discussion of the historicity of the gospels, the virgin birth, and the distinction between what Jesus did and how the gospel writers interpreted what he did may leave some believers feeling uneasy. Yet Drane’s defense is intelligent and his closure is always well within the evangelical position (Pauline authorship for Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles, for example, is defended by Drane). Though recognizing the place for presuppositions (p. 58), Drane carefully avoids falling back on his presuppositions until all angles of logical and rational evidence are addressed. He commendably refuses to resort to simplistic solutions for sometimes troubling questions.

A number of minor criticisms of Drane’s book—e.g., quoting Josephus’s statement about Jesus, “he was the Messiah,” and not questioning the authenticity of the statement (p. 77, but cf. p. 138)—does not negate the significant value of this NT introduction. For most purposes, Drane’s *Introducing the New Testament* should replace NT surveys, and though it cannot replace Guthrie’s *New Testament Introduction*, it may relegate it to use as a reference volume.

D. BRENT SANDY
GRACE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Evidence for Jesus, by R. T. France. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986.
Pp. 192. \$6.95. Paper.

In this book R. T. France, Professor of Biblical Studies at London Bible College, has rendered a service to all serious students of NT scholarship. This work originated partly in response to a British Broadcasting Corporation television series entitled *Jesus—the Evidence*, which tried to reconstruct a picture of the “historical Jesus” while dismissing the value of the NT writings as reliable primary documents. France focuses the reader’s attention chiefly

on the nature of the evidence with which historians must deal as they investigate the origins of Christianity. This includes both NT and extra-biblical literature, to which the author has given equal attention.

In appraising the significance of non-Christian sources, France is careful not to claim too much for such documents. Where there are doubts about alleged references to Jesus (due to textual uncertainties in the manuscripts, for example), he shows appropriate caution. He demonstrates both a keen awareness of the problems involved and an extensive knowledge of the usage to which the documents have been put by scholars across the centuries.

The author affirms complete confidence in the historicity of Jesus and in the reliability of the NT documents as valid historical evidence. The image of Jesus portrayed in this work is clearly that of the God-man worshiped by Christians since NT times. In some ways *The Evidence of Jesus* is one erudite scholar's testimony of faith.

France is at his best in exposing the logical and methodological flaws in the arguments of those who have attacked the NT and either denied the historicity of Jesus or at least contended that little can be known about him. After dealing at length with the problems that pertain to the transmission of the NT, France concludes, "The student of the history of Jesus is, from the point of view of textual criticism, on vastly safer ground than the student of the life of Julius Caesar or indeed of any other figure of ancient history" (p. 137).

The Evidence for Jesus will be useful primarily to those who have previous acquaintance with the subject. The style of writing is rather technical, and France's habitual use of long parenthetical expressions makes it difficult reading in places. It is, nevertheless, a noteworthy and helpful book.

JAMES EDWARD McGOLDRICK
CEDARVILLE COLLEGE

New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Epistle of James and the Epistles of John, by Simon J. Kistemaker. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986. Pp. 425. \$18.95. Cloth.

The epistles of James and John have been receiving considerable attention from commentators over the past several years, yet these epistles, rather neglected until recently, need to be brought back into the mainstream of evangelical thought, not only for their theological contribution (which is often minimized), but also for their profound ethical significance. In this work, Kistemaker, Professor of NT at Reformed Theological Seminary, adds a further volume to the series begun by the late William Hendriksen of Calvin Seminary. Kistemaker's first contribution as Hendriksen's successor was his exposition of Hebrews in 1984. According to the publisher, the series is designed to strike "a delicate balance between scholarly and practical concerns, between exegetical and homiletical material." The exposition, based upon the *NIV*, is thus intended for general use in the preparation of sermons and Bible lessons.

In his twenty page introduction, Kistemaker argues that the Lord's half-brother was the author and that he wrote from Israel in the middle of the fifth decade of the first century. The work is not a sermon but an epistle, and it evidences progress and development. The recipients are assumed to be Greek-speaking Jewish Christians who lived in Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Syria.

Kistemaker's conclusions on James are generally within the mainstream of conservative opinion. The "spirit" in 4:5 is the human spirit, not the Holy Spirit. The prohibition against oath-taking in 5:12 is not absolute; *carelessly* using an oath is what is condemned. Yet he sometimes differs from the majority view. The rich man in 1:9–11 is not a Christian. The scripture being fulfilled in 2:23 (Gen 15:6) refers to the entire life of Abraham, not merely the Moriah experience of 2:21.

At times Kistemaker appears inconsistent, or at least unclear. In his discussion of faith and works in 2:14–26, in opposition to most recent scholarship, he holds that all uses of "faith" in this section refer not to intellectual assent but to true saving faith—a faith that is "always alive and expresses itself in deeds." Yet he states that one cannot rely on faith alone, for "faith divorced from deeds does not justify a person." His discussion of the anointing with oil in 5:13–15 is likewise unclear, and he does not resolve the matter of whether or not the oil should be used today.

There are thirty-two pages of introduction to 1–3 John. Kistemaker favors a common author for the Johannine epistles—John the son of Zebedee (although he nowhere states this position directly in 11 pages of discussion). He considers the letters to have been written around A.D. 90–95 from Ephesus, primarily to Gentile Christians in Asia Minor. The false teaching addressed is an incipient Gnosticism, most likely of a Cerinthian rather than a Docetic variety.

With regard to 1 John 1:9, Kistemaker does not directly raise the issue of whether the confession of sins pertains to the unbeliever's conversion—a debate raging fairly strongly in some evangelical circles. His interpretation of the notoriously difficult question of sin in the believer (1 John 3:6, 9; 5:18) follows the majority position: "No one who is born of God will *continue* to sin" (3:9); i.e., remain in the grip of sin. The criticism of I. H. Marshall and others concerning this highly questionable stress on the present form of the verb is not considered.

Some of the commentary's weaknesses are perhaps understandable in light of the work's quite general purpose. Many times certain leading options are not considered, as in his discussion of faith and works (Jas 2:14–26). Often a key issue is not even raised. More serious, however, is the fact that the burning ethical questions and implications in many passages (e.g., Jas 5:1–6; 1 John 2:16–18) are hardly noticed. In addition, the headings and outline points in the introduction and exposition are often too brief to be helpful and are sometimes confusing and even misleading.

Despite these limitations, the commentary will be useful to the pastor and Bible student needing a basic exposition, including homiletical aids, without technical bypaths or intrascholarly debate. Kistemaker's frequent addenda on Greek words, phrases, and constructions sometimes offer superb

insights. His lack of dogmatism on debatable points is likewise commendable. The up-to-date footnotes reveal wide reading and are far above average in their usefulness for further study. The indexes of authors, scriptures, and extra-biblical references add to the considerable value of the work.

ROBERT V. RAKESTRAW
CRISWELL COLLEGE

Foundations of the Christian Faith: A Comprehensive and Readable Theology, revised in one volume, by James Montgomery Boice. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986. Pp. 740. \$24.95. Cloth.

This survey of theology for studious laymen appeared first in four volumes and has recently been reissued in this handsome form. Boice, pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, has accomplished exactly what the subtitle claims in presenting a comprehensive and readable theology. One need have no previous knowledge of the technical vocabulary of dogmatics in order to appreciate this clear, concise, and practical treatment of almost all the traditional divisions of Christian doctrine.

A convinced Calvinist, Boice took Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* as a guide in arranging his material, although he has included some topics that Calvin did not consider and has omitted others. Boice begins with a perceptive section about how man acquires the knowledge of God, and in the course of explaining this vital matter, he writes:

Ask an average Christian to talk about God. After getting past the expected answers, you will find that his God is a little god of vacillating sentiments. He is a god who would like to save the world, but who cannot. He would like to restrain evil, but somehow he finds it beyond his power. So he has withdrawn into semi-retirement, being willing to give good advice in a grandfatherly sort of way, but for the most part he has left his children to fend for themselves in a dangerous environment [pp. 25-26].

Such pointed prose is typical of Boice's style, so readers should have no difficulty in grasping his arguments.

Given Boice's efforts in defending inerrancy, it should come as no surprise that the inspiration and authority of the Bible receive extensive coverage in this book. In sixty-three succinctly written pages the author expounds on all of the vital aspects of this matter except one. After dealing helpfully with the authenticity of the Bible, principles for interpreting it correctly, and answers to its critics, Boice might have given at least some attention to the matter of canonicity, but he has not done so. This is an important issue, one with which laymen and pastors often need help. It is to be regretted that this volume offers nothing on this subject.

The author's lucid style serves him and his readers well in all areas of doctrine. This reviewer found the treatment of sin and salvation especially helpful, although the section dealing with the person and work of Christ would be difficult to improve. New believers and experienced students of

theology alike should find these sections enriching and the entire work a useful handbook to which they might refer for enlightenment on most doctrinal issues.

There is, however, one matter that gives cause for concern. Boice affirms that the Word of God and the Spirit of God are not to be detached from each other, yet he believes that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit in the NT are valid for today. As he puts it,

we dare not put God in a box on this matter, saying that he cannot give the gifts of healings or miracles today. . . . Notwithstanding the dangers of this gift [tongues], no Christian should forbid its exercise. . . . To forbid it would be to the church's impoverishment [pp. 614 & 619, author's emphasis].

Boice fails to interact with the possibility that admonitions which the apostles directed to NT believers do not authorize Christians of the post-apostolic era to seek or to exercise the *charismata*. Boice's view here mars what is otherwise an excellent book.

JAMES EDWARD McGOLDRICK
CEDARVILLE COLLEGE

The Subversion of Christianity, by Jacques Ellul. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986. Pp. 212. \$9.95. Paper.

Jacques Ellul asks the question: "How has it come about that the development of Christianity and the church has given birth to a society, a civilization, a culture that are completely opposite to what we read in the Bible, to what is indubitably the text of the law, the prophets, Jesus, and Paul?" (p. 3). He argues that successive historical cultures have not just deviated from what he considers the essence of Christianity, rather, these cultures have subverted Christianity.

To make matters worse, subversion is not simply the work of a non-Christian world, but of a Christian church—all in the name of human aggrandizement. Christianity has become little more than a religion. It is a religion built upon a tightly woven morality that leaves no questions unanswered and consequently reduces Christians to spiritual infants.

Ellul's great corpus of incisive and insightful works is well-known and rightly respected. Whether one ultimately agrees or disagrees with his propositions, the reader is always challenged with intellectually exciting questions and is able to look upon the world with more discerning eyes. Ellul must stand as a giant of twentieth-century theological and sociological thought if for no other reason than his consistent effort to reason from his understanding of both theology and sociology, not one or the other. Unlike his more theologically liberal peers, he does this while maintaining a tenacious commitment to the truth of Christ in Scripture. Although Ellul does not consider himself to be a thorough-going Barthian, he does draw the central mission of his work from Karl Barth. Like Barth, he seeks to demythologize the world through sociological analysis, thereby releasing revelation to its intended task.

Ellul's quest for a desacralized world and church, and therefore a purer Christian church, is evident early in his forty books and especially in *Subversion*. Ellul distrusts the organized church, all attempts at "Christian" society, all power—including money, politics, materialism, moral systems, religious social integration, and all other forms of institutionalization. These perspectives develop from what Ellul calls the "social intolerability of revelation." For Ellul, Christianity must stand in radical distinction from all that the world is. True Christianity, pure Christianity combats enculturation and rejects syncretism. Ellul wishes to reestablish the Christian's ability to live in a spiritually-defined freedom—in a tension between world and revelation and able to make Spirit-informed ethical decisions.

Ellul's strength is his weakness. He offers an articulate diagnosis of the world's ills, aiding Christians in their struggle not to be "of" the world. But he carries his fight to the point where it appears that he no longer can live "in" the world. He correctly asserts that history and culture influence Christianity, but he fails to credit Christianity with sufficient power to reach beyond the individual positively to influence history and culture.

In Ellul's analysis, history and culture are curiously beyond the reach of Christians motivated by a sense of stewardship, an understanding of the cultural mandate, or a desire to glorify a Creator God by "doing" as well as "being." Even more perplexing is Ellul's tendency to place history and culture beyond the reach of a sovereign God who both created and guides them. He does list examples of the resurgence of Christian truth and of returns to biblical authenticity. But they are tentative and underdeveloped. It is not, therefore, too much of an exaggeration, borrowing from H. Richard Niebuhr's 1951 *Christ and Culture*, to classify Ellul's stance as "Christ Against Culture." Ellul understates God's role in history, the meaning God gives to history, and the possibility of significant cultural transformation.

Reservations aside, this book provides a needed critique. It should be read by all who wish to develop their own intellectual tools for cultural analysis.

REX M. ROGERS
CEDARVILLE COLLEGE

Election and Predestination, by Paul K. Jewett. Foreword by Vernon Grounds. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985. Pp. xii + 147. \$8.95. Paper.

The subject of election and predestination has been a source for debate since the early church. The believing community has not been satisfied to opt for Augustine or Pelagius, Luther or Erasmus, Calvin or Arminius or the numerous moderating positions that have been developed over the centuries. Jewett's contribution will not bring a final answer to the subject either, but it will clarify the issues for contemporary readers. The treatment is well balanced, irenic, and very readable. Jewett is honest in identifying his commitment to the Augustinian-Calvinist side of the debate from the beginning. This approach is balanced by Grounds' foreword which treats the subject from the semi-Arminian side of the question.

Jewett's work begins with a useful survey of the historical material in which he carefully traces the various positions and the setting in which the debates took place. He sees more continuity than discontinuity in the Reformed tradition than has been seen by recent scholars (contra R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*, Oxford, 1980). All readers will find helpful material in this section. His treatment of 20th century theology is especially informative. The discussion of Barth's position on election is perhaps the finest analysis on the subject anywhere.

The next section of the book deals with the exegetical questions related to election and predestination. Jewett moves easily from historical concerns to biblical exegesis. Though his covenant theology is readily apparent as he traces the covenant people of God from the descendants of Abraham through the NT community, whether Jew or Gentile, the exposition of God's covenant faithfulness is especially helpful.

Jewett tackles the tough questions relating to individual or corporate election and opts for individual election as the biblical teaching on this difficult question. He rightly refutes Karl Barth's unscriptural corporate concept of election, which leads to universalism. He wrestles with the decrees of God and helps the reader work through the difference between supralapsarianism and infralapsarianism, noting the impressive logic of supralapsarianism, but concluding that such a position has clear ethical problems. Jewett argues for a balanced infralapsarianism that affirms unconditional election and rejects unconditional reprobation.

Jewett's work is worthy of a wide readership by those who agree and disagree with him. For those wrestling with this issue, Jewett will prove to be profitable reading. He has helped the believing community reaffirm that salvation is of God and is found only in the Lord Jesus Christ.

DAVID S. DOCKERY
CRISWELL COLLEGE

Chosen for Life: An Introductory Guide to the Doctrine of Divine Election,
C. Samuel Storms. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987. Pp. 142. \$6.95. Paper.

Storms's objective is delineated in his preface: "To write simply, but not simplistically" on the doctrine of unconditional election (p. 10). He targets the people in the pew as his primary audience. The preface also contains an open invitation to evaluate how successfully he has accomplished his objective.

The author is generally successful at making this difficult doctrinal issue intelligible for a general Christian readership. He is most successful in chaps. 1-4. Therein he replaces abstruse theological verbiage with vivid descriptions, word-pictures, parallelisms, and illustrations. The result is not only doctrinal clarity for the layman but also a pedagogical model for the theologian. Consequently, this volume is profitable for all students of the Word.

Storms's greatest problem arises when he compromises his commitment to the aforementioned objective by becoming quasi-technical. For example, some of his discussions of "relevant texts" and objections (cf. chaps. 7-9, 11)

are not exegetically satisfying. His theological presuppositions (many of which I consider to be valid, but some invalid) obviously determine his selected textual observations. Storms's wandering from exegetical inductivity is most obviously illustrated in chap. 10 where he endeavors to defend the traditional *ordo salutis* of Reformed theology. Characteristically, the author perpetuates confusion of efficacious calling and regeneration.

Apart from these relatively minor weaknesses, the volume draws its strength from a solid theology proper and a thoroughly biblical hamartiology. Coupling these theological assets with the author's transparent style, this volume is highly recommended to all.

GEORGE ZEMEK
GRACE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation, by James Davison Hunter. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1987. Pp. xii + 302. \$19.95. Cloth.

It is difficult enough to define evangelicalism. Hunter, a University of Virginia sociologist, has compounded the difficulty by trying to anticipate the direction of the movement in the next generation. Nevertheless, the result is an intriguing and valuable work worthy of serious consideration whether or not one accepts all of its conclusions.

The basis of the presentation is a survey taken by students at nine colleges and seven theological seminaries in 1982. Additional data was gathered from other groups later. The nine colleges represented are: Wheaton, Gordon, Westmont, Bethel, Houghton, Messiah, George Fox, Seattle-Pacific University, and Taylor University. The seven seminaries are: Fuller, Conservative Baptist, Asbury, Talbot, Westminster, Gordon-Conwell, and Wheaton Graduate School.

The survey draws opinions from students on theological, social and political subjects. The results have been carefully considered and compared with similar studies done previously and with Hunter's understanding of traditional evangelicalism. The author concludes that there is a definite leftward movement in the areas addressed. The report of the data along with the interpretations by Hunter give much food for thought, especially for those in Christian higher education. Such education, it seems, is a threat to traditional evangelical thinking—a greater threat than secular education because many learn to protect themselves in the secular institution while lowering the guard in the Christian school (pp. 176–78). Hunter writes: "Among Protestant colleges, the more serious a commitment to the task of higher education, the more prevalent the liberalization and secularization tendencies" (p. 177).

Some of the author's conclusions are thought-provoking. While he believes that it is inappropriate to say that evangelical theology is becoming more liberal, "evidence is suggestive of a common trend, one in which the theological tradition is conforming in its own unique way to the cognitive and normative assumptions of modern culture. . . ." (p. 46). This point is an important one in Hunter's consideration, for he concludes that evangelicalism

is heavily influenced by its cultural setting. With regard to theology, he observes that biblical inerrancy is not an issue for the coming generation of evangelicals (p. 25). The data also reveals that almost one-third of the students believe that the only way of reaching heaven "is through personal faith in Jesus Christ *except* for those who have not had the opportunity to hear of Jesus Christ" (p. 36). A great interest in social issues is apparent (pp. 43-46). Many habits formally considered objectionable among evangelicals are not viewed in such strongly negative ways today, leading Hunter to write: "The traditional meaning of worldliness has indeed lost its relevance for the coming generation of evangelicals" (p. 63).

An excursus on the topic of the "traditional family" in America is most interesting in light of the call on the part of many evangelicals for a return to that standard. Hunter's discussion exposes an evangelical miscue: the American traditional family is not equivalent to the biblical model for family.

Several problems, however, may skew Hunter's conclusions. First, the institutions chosen may or may not reflect the coming generation of evangelicals accurately. Significant institutions were chosen for the poll, but no southern college or seminary is included, though large and significant evangelical institutions exist there. Second, the poll reflects the attitudes of the students of 1982 and may be significant for that group but not reflective of positions of later classes. Third, a question can be raised with regard to the comparison of attitudes of students with the conservative evangelical standard used as a measure. Some of the students surveyed were at schools known for a progressive rather than a traditional evangelicalism. Fourth, the possibility exists that students might gravitate toward a more conservative stance upon graduation. These reservations do not refute Hunter's conclusions but simply raise concerns that need to be considered before accepting them as appropriate.

Hunter's work is a significant contribution to the study of evangelicalism and should serve as a resource for evangelical institutions of higher education as they prepare students to live effectively in the present world while dedicated to biblical faith and practice.

RONALD T. CLUTTER
GRACE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

On Capital Punishment, by William Baker. Originally published *Worthy of Death*, 1973. Reprint ed. Chicago: Moody Press, 1985. Pp. 166. \$5.95. Paper.

Baker begins this compelling argument for capital punishment with an interesting historical survey of capital punishment. The main thrust of his analysis is that God demands capital punishment because it is just: "Whosoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man" (Gen 9:6). Baker bolsters his case by citing support for capital punishment from early Christian writers and theological leaders such as Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther and John Calvin. Calvin said, "Those, therefore, who consider that it is wrong to shed the blood of the guilty are

contending against God" (p. 14). Baker also notes that, until Holland repealed it in 1870, capital punishment was the standard punishment for willful murder in every nation of the world. Others followed suit through the years, until in 1972, the United States Supreme Court handed down *Furman vs. Georgia*, striking down the States' existing capital punishment laws and mandating them to rewrite them.

Thirty-eight states now have laws which mandate the execution of first degree murderers. There are over 1,200 convicted murderers on "Death Row" across the nation, but only a handful of actual executions are performed each year because frequent and lengthy appeals have effectively eviscerated the punishment.

Baker briefly observes that much of the debate on this topic today is on humanistic grounds, ignoring Biblical mandates. Many fail to see capital punishment as due process of law and ignore the scriptural call for the death sentence as just punishment for willfully killing one created in the image of God. But, of course, Baker stresses that this argument will only carry weight with those who accept the authority of the Bible.

Baker makes a distinct contribution to the literature available in this field in his analysis of the data regarding the deterrent effect of capital punishment. Statistically, capital punishment seems to deter murder: murders per 100,000 population in 1966 were 5.6 per year, which increased steadily since, to between 9 and 10 per 100,000 today. Thus the murder rate has doubled since capital punishment was abolished.

But Baker goes beyond statistical justification for the death sentence: he also presents scripture where God affirms that punishment will deter others in the future from committing the same crime, citing Deut 19:15-21, "Thus you shall purge the evil from among you . . . and the rest will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such an evil thing among you." A prosecuting attorney would find much material here which could be quite persuasive with a jury in a capital crime case. The basic question which a prosecutor must frequently face is whether a jury member's vote for conviction will result in a death sentence. Many on a jury can have an aversion to capital punishment (even though on routine examination of jury members this issue is always surfaced). But the prosecutor can overcome this by arguing that it is just that a man's blood be shed if he has shed another's. Biblical references are frequently used by prosecutors in this regard, and Baker has made available a reasoned and learned rationale for believing and taking God at His word.

Baker's best argument is the one which he most emphasizes—that God prescribed capital punishment not just because it is a deterrent to future murders, but mainly because it is an eminently just punishment for one who kills another whom God made in His image. A serious reader will find that the book satisfies, therefore, on two levels: it provides the facts and statistics to support capital punishment, and it deals persuasively with the deeper theological questions which arise when one considers taking another's life for his crime.

JOHN R. PRICE
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

Church, Ministry, and Sacraments in the New Testament, by C. K. Barrett. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985. Pp. 110. \$6.95. Paper.

Barrett's brief and nontechnical volume contains his Didsbury Lectures originally delivered at British Isles Nazarene College in 1983. He writes as a Methodist who has opposed the union of Methodism with Anglicanism because of his convictions about the New Testament theology of the Church. Fully aware of the perils of such a sketchy overview of the topic, he admits that it might be handled better in forty-four lectures than in four (p. 8)!

But four lectures is all the book contains. The first discusses the relationship between Jesus and the church, advancing the paradoxical thesis that "the church is at the same time central and peripheral" in the New Testament (pp. 9, 26). Ministry as the topic of the second chapter is also developed along the lines of a paradox, namely that everyone in the body is equal but its gifted leaders are "more equal" (p. 37). Such leaders are to be accepted by the church but not allowed to dominate it (p. 53). The viability of sacraments and sacramental theology is handled in chapter three. Once again the "paradox of centrality and peripherality" (p. 75) is utilized to expound Barrett's understanding. The final chapter examines the developing church, including the question of *Frühkatholizismus* (early catholicism) in the Pastoral Epistles and significant passages in the post-apostolic fathers. Barrett asks in his conclusion whether the church in any age has taken the New Testament seriously enough (p. 101). He believes that far too seldom does the church balance its peripherality against its centrality. The book also includes brief indexes of New Testament passages, early Christian literature, and names and subjects.

Barrett's treatment of the crucial themes mentioned above is successful. His overviews avoid being simplistic because they are distilled from a lifetime of scholarship. Whether one agrees with all his exegetical and theological conclusions, one must appreciate the manner in which he moves through the material and deals with the major issues. When Barrett does pause for a bit of deeper exegesis, as on pp. 15-18 where he discusses Matt 16:17-18, the results are stimulating. It is surprising, however, that Barrett has elevated Markan priority to an assured fact, not a matter of hypothesis (p. 72). Conservatives will note that the Pastoral Epistles are viewed as deuter-Pauline (pp. 31, 82), that the historicity of the gospels is not always upheld (pp. 9, 21, yet cf. pp. 26-27), and that the Elder of 2-3 John is handled rather unflatteringly (pp. 46-47). Barrett's argument from silence that not all first century converts were baptized is unconvincing (p. 60). Finally, the non-technical style of the book is hampered at times by the unnecessary inclusion of transliterated Hebrew and Greek words and unexplained English technical terms (e.g., eleemosynary, p. 34).

To conclude, Barrett's volume makes for provocative reading. He paints the New Testament picture of the church with broad and rapid strokes. While readers might desire a more extensive treatment, there is much value in Barrett's masterful overview of crucial themes. His view of these themes will offer little comfort to those with high church convictions of apostolic succession and *ex opere operatum* sacraments. His central thesis of simultaneous centrality and peripherality may cross over the boundary of paradox into the

realm of contradiction. However, his concluding call for the Church to take the New Testament seriously (p. 101) should be heeded by every Christian reader.

DAVID L. TURNER
GRAND RAPIDS BAPTIST SEMINARY

A Practical Theology of Spirituality, by Lawrence O. Richards. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987. Pp. 253. \$18.95. Cloth.

What is spirituality? What does it mean to *be* spiritual? What does it mean to *do* spiritual acts. Is spirituality primarily being or doing, or is it a combination of the two? However one may word the question, there is no consensus about spirituality among evangelicals. The 1987 annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society was devoted to the theme of spirituality and the diversity of discussion illustrated the lack of one answer to the question, or even one question! Richards has given us his perspective on the subject and wisely calls his work *a* theology rather than *the* theology of spirituality.

Richards's goal is to clarify the elusive concept of "spiritual" and present a model for pursuing spirituality (p. vii). The author asserts that "spirituality is living a human life in union with God" (p. 67). Richards moves skillfully toward this definition, by establishing that Jesus is the only legitimate model for spirituality and then identifying prominent "aspects" of spirituality in Jesus' life. From this base he suggests that the believer needs to conform to Jesus' behavior and thus be spiritual. Richards establishes this rationale by arguing that all models of spirituality except Jesus have failed, Jesus is the only person who has lived life in union with God, therefore, spirituality is living life in union with God *like* Jesus did.

After establishing this rationale, Richards devotes the majority of his book to elucidating his view of human life as Jesus lived it and asserting that spirituality *is* living life like Jesus lived it (pp. 75-248). On the one hand, Richards has written a creative and well organized book, but on the other hand, it is merely a new variation on a well-worn theme in the literature: live like Jesus. His success in answering the question "What is spirituality?" is less than satisfying. A major flaw of the book, in spite of Richards's compelling devotional argument about living like Jesus, is that an exegetical base is not established to answer the question of the book.

Three avenues are available for proposing a theological model: the direct statements of scripture, the implied teaching of scripture, and creative models devised from scripture but not necessarily intended by a passage or group of texts. Richards's work primarily falls within the last category. Consequently, it inadequately defines what biblical spirituality is.

A glaring omission in Richards's endeavor to develop a biblical view of spirituality is the absence of a discussion of the four passages in the New Testament which use the adjective "spiritual" to describe a person as spiritual (1 Cor 2:15; 3:1; 14:37; and Gal 6:1). While the verses are cited, they are not

probed for their contribution to the establishment of a biblical definition of spirituality. Also, there is no overview of how this term is used in its other occurrences. Consequently, while Richards has stimulated analysis of what it means to be Christian, he unfortunately does not provide lines of exegetical evidence to define "spiritual" as the term is used in scripture. This should be the starting point.

When one accepts this book for what it is—a discussion of how Jesus lived and how we should imitate Him—there are many positive things that can be said about it. The author leads the reader along so that his points are easily grasped and the accumulation of his rationale is clearly communicated. It is also pedagogically useful. Each chapter is organized in a similar manner and concludes with a "Probe" section where the author has given some creative ways to think through the content of the chapter.

Richards's volume has made a contribution to the devotional literature on Christian living. It will not, however, provide the scholar or advanced student with an exegetically supported answer to the question, "What is spirituality?"

GARY T. MEADORS
GRACE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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IN APPRECIATION

It has not been the policy of the *Grace Theological Journal* to publish editorial comment but an exception was thought necessary at this point in the history of the publication.

Several fine men have served *GTJ* well in its ten years, but none has had the impact of Dr. D. Brent Sandy. In his two years of service as Managing Editor, Dr. Sandy brought financial stability and a strong organizational structure. The outreach of the journal was extended through an expanding list of subscribers as a result of sound management and outstanding editorial work.

The editorial committee of *GTJ* felt obliged to share with our readers our sense of debt to Dr. Sandy, our warmest appreciation for his efforts, and best wishes in his new ministry. His position has been filled but he cannot be replaced.

THE LITERARY UNITY OF 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13–5:11

TRACY L. HOWARD

1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11 has been a fertile source of debate among both pre- and posttribulational advocates. Yet often wrong assumptions are made by the exegete when he/she approaches this important eschatological text of Paul. One of those assumptions is that 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 and 5:1–11 describe two entirely different eschatological events. Coupled with this is the assumption that Paul describes both events through a diachronic time scheme. However, Paul in no way attempts to differentiate two events in this passage. Instead, Paul's eschatological presentation is very general or even "aoristic" in focus. This conclusion is drawn in some measure from a clear literary unity that characterizes the passage.

* * *

INTRODUCTION

First Thessalonians 4:13–5:11 is one of the longest and earliest eschatological sections in the Pauline corpus. The passage contains a discussion of both the Parousia of Jesus and the Day of the Lord couched in the imagery of apocalyptic contemporary to the first century. The descriptions of these apocalyptic events along with their apparent imminent nature has raised numerous theological questions. Discussions related to Paul's view of imminency, his concept of eschatological development, and his use of apocalyptic imagery fill the literature. Another question which immediately emerges from an analysis of this text is whether the events described in 4:13–18 and 5:1–11 are to be viewed as distinct or in some sense equivalent. D. G. Bradley proposed that 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 and 5:1–11 were individual examples of the literary form *topos*.¹ According to Bradley, "the distinctive characteristic of the *topos* is that it is composed of

¹D. G. Bradley, "The *Topos* as a Form in the Pauline Paraenesis," *JBL* 72 (1953) 238–46.

more than one sentence dealing with the same subject.”² Furthermore, the *topos* is an independent form which is self-contained and has a loose or even arbitrary connection with the context.³ Hence both 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 and 5:1–11, according to Bradley, deal with two similar though quite different situations. G. Friedrich has raised the problem of the authenticity of 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11. He sees such incongruity between 5:1–11 and the preceding passage, 4:13–18, that he concludes that 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11 is inauthentic, a non-Pauline interpolation.⁴ Other such as Harnisch⁵ and Schmithals,⁶ though accepting a Pauline authorship, argue that Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11 at a later date when the community became agitated by gnostics. In the context of the pretribulational and posttribulational rapture debate, a distinction between the two texts is sometimes suggested. For example, Walvoord, a pretribulationist, writes:

The fact that the rapture is mentioned first in chapter 4 before the day of the Lord is presented in chapter 5 is significant. The important subject was the rapture, including the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the translation of living believers. The rapture is not introduced as a phase of the day of the Lord and seems to be *distinguished* from it. . . . Accordingly, it is clear that 1 Thessalonians 5 is not talking specifically about the rapture, but about *another truth*.⁷ (Italics added.)

²Ibid., 240–43.

³Criticism has been offered on specific points of Bradley’s thesis. V. P. Furnish says that Bradley’s attempt to show this is not successful and adds: “There are few passages in the Pauline letters which cannot be related in some significant way to particular problems and needs the apostle is confronting” (*The Love Command in the New Testament* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972], 90). More recently others have likewise criticized Bradley’s view. Terence Y. Mullins narrows Bradley’s definition by showing that the *topos* form has three essential elements: injunction, reason, and discussion (“Topos as a NT Form,” *JBL* 99 [1980] 541–47); John C. Brunt has argued additionally that appeal to the *topos* form to show that advice is not directed to a specific situation is not valid (“More on the *Topos* as a New Testament Form,” *JBL* 104 [1985] 495–500). Brunt’s criticism is important. In reference to this paper, an appeal to the form *topos* is simply not sufficient to indicate an isolated or arbitrary unit. Thus although 1 Thess 5:1–11 may reflect the form of *topos*, such does not of necessity argue for its isolation from 1 Thess 4:13–18 if other contextual features suggest otherwise.

⁴Gerhard Friedrich, *Die Briefe an die Galater, Epheser, Philipper, Kolosser, Thessalonicher und Philemon*, NTD, vol. 8 (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1976) 203–51.

⁵Wolfgang Harnisch, *Eschatologische Existenz: Ein Exegetischer Beitrag zum Sachanliegen von 1. Thessalonischer 4:13–5:11*, FRLANT, vol. 110 (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1973) 77–82.

⁶Walter Schmithals, *The Apocalyptic Movement*, trans. John E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975) 160–67.

⁷John F. Walvoord, *The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation: A Biblical and Historical Study of Posttribulationism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House,

This feeling of disparity between 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 5:1-11 raises the need for a thorough evaluation of the entire section in order to see whether such disparity is real or only apparent. Is there a disjunction between the two texts or does 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 constitute literary as well as theological unity? In order to evaluate the literary and theological unity of the entire pericope, several questions must be addressed:

1. Does Paul's purpose change from 4:13-18 to 5:1-11, or does it remain the same throughout the pericope. In other words, does Paul maintain a parenetic purpose or shift his purpose at 5:1?
2. Is the subject matter the same in 4:13-18 and 5:1-11? Related to this question is the significance of $\pi\epsilon\rho\iota \delta\acute{e}$ in 5:1. Does this phrase constitute a major break in Paul's subject matter? If so, does this disjunction automatically suggest the disparity that many attempt to support?
3. Are there any stylistic parallels between 4:13-18 and 5:1-11 that would suggest literary unity throughout both passages, namely, the repetition of a pre-Pauline credal formula or perhaps an *inclusio*?
4. Is there internal consistency throughout 4:13-5:11? If it could be shown that 4:13-5:11 (or at least a major portion of it) is closely parallel in structure and arrangement to another unified pericope in the New Testament, this would suggest the essential unity of 4:13-5:11 rather than a disjunction at 5:1.
5. Is there any evidence of theological change from 4:13-18 to 5:1-11, namely, is there any distinction between $\pi\alpha\rhoou\sigma\acute{a}$, "Parousia" and $\eta\mu\acute{e}r\alpha \kappa\nu\rho\iota\upsilon$, "Day of the Lord?" If not, why does Paul change his terminology to describe the same event? Furthermore, if there is no distinction, what then is the nature of Pauline eschatology as presented in 4:13-5:11?

The purpose of this study is to address these questions and to set forth reasons that support the literary unity of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11. Limitation of space forbids a detailed exegetical analysis of the entire pericope. Thus while it is necessary to present an exegetical

1976) 115; see also Paul D. Feinberg, "A Response to 'The Case for the Posttribulation Rapture Position' by Douglas J. Moo," in *The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulational?*, ed. Richard R. Reiter (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984) 226. Feinberg argues that Paul clearly intends some kind of distinction between 1 Thess 4:13-18 and 5:1-11.

analysis of some texts, elsewhere the discussion will be a presentation of the results of the exegetical work done in the passage.

The phrase *literary unity* is understood to mean that an author, in this case Paul, conveys the same subject matter with a unified purpose throughout a given text without a major disjunction in either subject matter or purpose. It will be proposed that Paul deliberately employs certain literary devices to accomplish the task of communicating a unified message. There are several features which suggest that 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11 is to be regarded as one unified pericope.

PAUL'S PARENETIC PURPOSE

Both 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 and 5:1–11 are parenetic in purpose. In 1 Thessalonians 4:1–5:22, Paul amplifies the instruction he gave while at Thessalonica in light of information he received from Timothy. In this portion of the letter he considers their life and faith in the community. For this reason, this entire section of the epistle has been called *parenthesis*.⁸ However, the passage does not comprise one subject but several.

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

Paul addresses the issue of sexual purity (4:3–8) followed by an exhortation to love one another (4:9–12). He then shifts his focus to a lengthy eschatological discourse which constitutes the heart of his parenthesis.⁹ Two major issues comprise this discussion. The first is the relation of the dead to the Parousia (4:13–18), and the second is the ethical responsibility of those alive in view of the coming Day of the Lord (5:1–11). The purpose of Paul's discussion in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11 is not primarily theological but eschatological issues are addressed in view of *ethical concerns*. Paul's purpose in 4:13–18 is stated explicitly in verse 13. For that reason, a more detailed examination of verse 13 is appropriate in order to clarify his parenetic focus.

Paul introduces a transition in thought which is indicated by the particle δέ as well as the phrase οὐ θέλομεν δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν ἀδελφοί, “now we do not desire you to be ignorant brethren.” This phrase is used elsewhere by Paul to introduce a new topic.¹⁰ Specifically, Paul

⁸ *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume*, s.v. “Parenthesis,” by D. Schroeder, 643. Schroeder defines parenthesis as a “technical term to refer to all general exhortations of an ethical nature.”

⁹ Edgar Krentz, “1 Thess.: A Document of Roman Hellenism” (unpublished paper presented to the Thessalonians Seminar, National Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, December 1979) 15.

¹⁰ Cf. 2 Cor 1:8; Rom 1:13; 11:25; 1 Cor 10:1; 12:1.

desires these believers not to be ignorant “regarding those who have fallen asleep,” περὶ τῶν κεκοιμημένων.¹¹ From the use of περί¹² following ἀγνοεῖν, it is evident that the problem these believers faced centered on the fortune of the faithful departed (τῶν κεκοιμημένων).¹³ Thus it is likely that the cause of their sorrow was not disappointment over the nonarrival of the Parousia, as Best suggests,¹⁴ but rather anxiety over the issue of whether the Christian dead would suffer a disadvantage at the Parousia.¹⁵ The question still remains why Paul

¹¹The perfect κεκοιμημένων has better geographical distribution (DFG Μ) than the present κοιμώμενων (KAB 33.81) and is preferred. There is little difference in meaning in view of Paul’s overall purpose. The perfect would reflect the present state of those who had already died whereas the present would suggest a continual process during which various ones died at different times.

¹²περί with the genitive denotes the object or person to which the action refers or relates; see BAGD, 644.

¹³κοιμάω was used literally in both non-biblical and biblical Greek to denote the activity of sleeping (Homer, *Odyssey*, 12.372; [LXX] Gen 19:14; 28:11; 1 Esdr 3:3; Tob 2:9; 1 Macc 11:6; Matt 28:13; Luke 22:45; John 11:12; Acts 12:6). However, κοιμάω was also used metaphorically in antiquity in the sense of death (Homer, *Illiad* 11:241; [LXX] 3 Kgs 2:10 [the idiom “to sleep with one’s fathers” occurs 33 times in the [LXX]; cf. 2 Macc 12:42–45; in this text the phrase “fallen asleep in godliness” closely resembles the use found in 1 Thess 4:13]). In the New Testament, fourteen out of eighteen occurrences of κοιμάω are references to death, and interestingly, all of the Pauline uses are in this category (1 Cor 7:39; 11:30; 15:6, 18, 20, 51; 1 Thess 4:13, 14, 15 [of the 9 occurrences in Paul, 7 appear in two major eschatological texts, 1 Cor 15 and 1 Thess 4]). The use of sleep for death is probably a euphemism (see Ernest Best, *A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* [New York: Harper and Row, 1972] 185; F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, WBC [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982] 95; H. A. A. Kennedy, *St. Paul’s Conceptions of the Last Things* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904] 247). It may be going too far to read into the work an implicit concept of *that from which one would awaken* (Bruce, 96), although it is quite true that the word meant this in contemporary Jewish writings (cf. 2 Esdr 7:32, “and the earth shall give up those who sleep in it” [NEB], is followed in 7:76 by a description of the joy experienced by the righteous in their habitations immediately after death and before they are awakened; see also *1 Enoch* 100:51; *2 Apoc. Bar.* 21:24). The problem with seeing an implicit idea of awaken is that the metaphor of sleep as death occurs in works unacquainted with a resurrection hope (R. H. Charles, *Eschatology* [New York: Schocken Books, 1963] 132, n. 1. For example, in Catullus 5:4–6 one reads, “Suns may set and rise again. For us, when the short light has once set, remains to be slept the sleep of one unbroken night.”). Thus such a metaphor does not arise from the idea of a body left behind while the soul departs to a continued existence elsewhere or from the notion that the sleeping person will afterwards wake up to new life. Certainly the metaphor is in harmony with resurrection (Alfred Plummer, *St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Thessalonians* [London: Robert Scott, 1918] 69) but it probably only suggests the similarity in appearance between a sleeping body and a dead body, i.e., restfulness and peace normally characterize both (*TDNT*, s.v. “καθεύδω,” by A. Oepke, 3:433).

¹⁴Best, *Thessalonians*, 203.

¹⁵Bruce, *Thessalonians*, 95; W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (reprint ed., Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980) 291; A. L. Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966) 108–09; Williams Neil, *The Epistle of Paul to the*

would have had to deal with this issue in this particular community. A couple of reasons may be suggested.

First, it is possible that this is an issue on which the Thessalonian Christians had not been adequately informed.¹⁶ While with these believers it is possible that Paul had not discussed the relation of survivors to the dead at the Parousia. Apparently some of the believers had died since the time of Paul's visit and, consequently, questions had arisen concerning the relation of the faithful departed to the Parousia.

Second, it is possible that a subtle polemic is offered against a contemporary teaching that advocated the advantage of those alive at the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom. One of the main currents of eschatological thought in Judaism was that the Messianic Kingdom would be the consummation of world history and its scene would be this earth, albeit an earth transformed in different ways. Davies says that "according to the earliest sources only those alive at the advent of the Messiah would be judged and could participate in the blessings of the Messianic Kingdom."¹⁷ In 4 Ezra the author gives a vision of the Man rising from the sea; in this vision the pre-existent Messiah, following the annihilation of His enemies, gathers a multitude of his own remnant to himself. 4 Ezra 13:22–24 says:

As for what you said about those who are left, this is the interpretation: He who brings the peril at that time will himself protect those who fall into peril, who have works and have faith in the Almighty. Understand therefore that *those who are left are more blessed than those who have died.*¹⁸ (Italics added.)

The suggestions of a polemic against such teaching would help to explain the anxiety growing out of the possibility that those who died did not have the same advantage as those who were alive at the Parousia. This might also explain why Paul uses such emphatic

Thessalonians (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950) 99; Beda Rigaux, *Les Epîtres Aux Thessalonioiens* (Paris: Librairie Leoffre, 1956) 527.

¹⁶Bruce, *Thessalonians*, p. 95; James E. Frame, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912) 164; see also Willi Marxen, "Auslegung von 1 Thess 4, 13–18," *ZTK* 66 (1969) 26.

¹⁷Davies, *Judaism*, 287.

¹⁸B. M. Metzger, "The Fourth Book of Ezra: A New Translation and Introduction," in vol. 1 of *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1983) 552; see also 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 70.1–71.1. It is not out of the question that such a view may have been held by scribes prior to A.D. 70 and that the Thessalonians had been influenced by such a view through their exposure to the synagogue (cf. Acts. 17:2–4).

language as, “we who are alive and remain until the Parousia will by no means precede those who have died” (cf. v. 15, οὐ μὴ φθάσωμεν).¹⁹ One, however, need not suppose with Schmithals that the community was misled by gnosticizing visitors who completely denied the future resurrection hope.²⁰

The purpose of Paul’s desire for these believers not to be ignorant regarding those who had died is that “they might not grieve as those who do not have hope,” ἵνα μὴ λυπήσθε καθὼς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα. The *ἵνα* should be taken as introducing purpose rather than result.²¹ This is the only purpose statement in 4:13–18 and it is related to pastoral or parenetic concerns, namely, that these believers “might not grieve.” The verb *λυπέω* normally conveys the idea of “grief, distress, sadness, or sorrow.”²² The negative *μή* with the present subjunctive may suggest in this context the desire for the cessation of an action already in progress. Those in this community were in the process of grieving over loved ones who had died, apparently for fear that they might suffer disadvantage at the Parousia. Paul is thus attempting to comfort them in this grief (cf. 4:18).

Paul further qualifies his purpose by a comparative clause introduced by *καθὼς* *καὶ*. He states that his desire is that these believers not grieve “as also the rest who do not have hope,” *καθὼς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα*. Two alternatives are possible for the interpretation of *καθὼς*. First, it is possible to take the comparative particle as introducing a comparison of manner.²³ This would mean that Paul did not desire this congregation to grieve in the same way as those who have no hope. The second possibility is to take *καθὼς* in an absolute sense.²⁴ This would mean that Paul is telling those at Thessalonica not to grieve at all as do unbelievers who have no hope. Such an absolute sense would not exclude sorrow over the loss of a

¹⁹The construction οὐ μή with the subjunctive φθάσωμεν here expresses emphatic negation.

²⁰Walter Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics*, trans. John E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972) 160–62.

²¹BAGD, p. 376; *ἵνα* most frequently denotes purpose rather than conceived result, although at times it becomes very difficult to distinguish the two. The problem is that the semitic mind was reluctant to distinguish between the purpose and consequence, particularly in light of God’s actions (cf. M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek*, trans. Joseph Smith [Rome Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 1963], #351–52; C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek* [Cambridge: University Press, 1959] 142).

²²Ibid., 481.

²³Ibid., 391.

²⁴John Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians* (reprint ed., Minneapolis: James and Klock Christian Publishing Co., 1977) 145–49; Frame, *Thessalonians*, 167; Neil, *Thessalonians*, 92; D. E. H. Whiteley, *Thessalonians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969) 68.

loved one, but it would preclude sorrow as far as the Parousia is concerned.²⁵

The discussion to this point reveals Paul's parenetic purpose for writing 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18. He is not attempting to set forth an isolated eschatological discourse but is addressing a very practical problem within the community that involved eschatological concerns. Paul desires to communicate a message of comfort, a message that promises resurrection for departed believers by virtue of their identification and union with Christ. This same union also provides the basis for the translation of those who are alive at His Parousia (cf. 4:17). That the hope of resurrection to be with Christ is grounded in the resurrection of Christ Himself²⁶ is made evident in verses 15–17. Because Christ arose from the dead, those believers who have died in the Lord prior to the Parousia will in no way experience any disadvantage when Jesus comes. Instead, they will actually precede those who are alive at that time (14:16–17).

1 Thessalonians 5:1–11

Paul's parenthesis continues in 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11. In 4:13–18 he addresses the issue of the position of the *dead in Christ* at the Parousia with the purpose of comforting those alive. He now shifts his emphasis slightly to address the ethical responsibilities of living believers in light of the coming Day of the Lord. Instead of addressing the time in which the Day of the Lord will come, he states that no one knows *the times and the seasons* ($\tauῶν χρόνων καὶ τῶν καιρῶν$)

²⁵ Best, p. 186. The reason why such a grief is precluded is because it is a characteristic of "those who do not have hope." Most likely this denote unbelieving humanity outside of Christ (cf. Eph 2:3, 12). The concept of hope for Paul is especially related to the promise of blessedness and joy the believer will experience at the Parousia (cf. Titus 2:13). That this hope is not connected simply to a belief in the after-life is clear. It is evident from Greek writers, both pagan and Jewish, that there was a belief in an after-life (Plato in *Gorgias*, 524D states that the individual should not be judged except after death for then the soul is separated from the body; then the soul strips out of the deceiving clothing of the body and it can be judged justly; cf. *Cratylus*, 403B. Furthermore, there also existed a hope in view of death in Jewish circles; cf. Philo, *de Virtutibus*, 76; *Legum Allegoriarum*, 2:57, 59; he also held the Greek view that the nakedness of the soul *after death* was desirable; see Wis 3:1–4: "But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them . . . yet is their hope full of immortality"; also it is evident that resurrection was an aspect of rabbinic theology; cf. *Sota* 9.15; *Sanh* 10:1). However, the believer has been identified in a *union* with both the death and the resurrection of Christ (cf. Rom 6:3–5). Because of this union, those believers who have died will be raised to be with Christ when He returns at the Parousia. This is a hope about which the pagan world knew nothing.

²⁶ *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, s.v. "Hope," by Alan Richardson; *NIDNTT*, s.v. "Hope," by E. Hoffmann, 2:242.

of its coming because it comes “as a thief in the night” (ώς κλέπτης ἐν νυκτί) (vv. 1–2). Paul is telling the Thessalonians that they do not need someone to write to them concerning the times and the seasons of the Day of the Lord because it is not for any person to know this information.²⁷ However, what they should know is that the Day is coming and one’s preparation for it is dependent on that person’s spiritual condition. Paul says that those who are unbelievers will be overtaken in surprise and will by no means escape judgment (v. 3).²⁸

Paul shifts his emphasis in verse 4 to address the relation of the Day of the Lord to the believing community.²⁹ Paul employs an *indicative-imperative* model in his discussion. He first tells these believers what they are in verses 4–5 (*indicative*) and then he exhorts them to *live out* what they are in verses 6–8 (*imperative*). In verses 4–5 Paul says that believers are not in darkness (ἐν σκότει) but instead are sons of light (υἱοὶ φωτός).³⁰ Christians are not a part of the darkness in which the unbelieving world lies. They are instead identified with Christ. Thus as a result (ἴνα)³¹ they will not be in a

²⁷ Robert H. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), pp. 107–08; also John A. Sproule, “An Exegetical Defense of Pretribulationism” (Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, May 1981) 157.

²⁸ This is the second time Paul uses οὐ μή with the subjunctive (ἐκφύγωσιν) in this eschatological discourse for emphatic negation (cf. 4:15).

²⁹ The shift to believers from humankind in general is indicated by the adversative use of δέ as well as the change to the second person ὑμεῖς along with the vocative ἀδελλοῖ.

³⁰ The imagery of light and darkness is frequently used throughout ancient literature. The figures of “darkness” (ኩሽት) and “light” (ኩክ) are found in the Old Testament to denote two opposing ethical spheres in which sinners and believers exist (*darkness*: Job 29:3; Isa 2:5; Mic 7:8; *light*: Job 22:9–11; Pss 74:20; 82:5). The use of light and darkness in relation to eschatology and ethics became especially strong at Qumran as well as in Jewish apocalyptic material (see 1QS 3:13–4:26; esp. 4:15–16; 4:26 which describes two categories of humanity: one of light and the other of darkness. The text says in 15:16, “In these [two] classes all the hosts of their generations have a share; in their [two] ways they walk and the entire work of their activity [falls] within their [two] classes, according to everybody’s share, large or small, in all times forever”; then in 26, “He knows the work of their actions in all times [of eternity] and He allots them to mankind for knowledge of good [and evil], this deciding the fate of every living being, according to his spiritual quality . . . visitation,” [Italics added], *The Manual of Discipline*, trans. P. Wenberg Moller [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1957] 26–27; regarding light and darkness in Qumran texts, see further Friedrich Notscher, *Zur Theologischen Terminologie Der Qumran Texte* [Bonn: Peter Hanstein Verlag, 1956] 92–133. For the use of *light* and *darkness* in Jewish apocalyptic, see *T. Naph.* 2:7–10; *T. Benj.* 5:3; *1 Enoch* 61:12; 108:11). The antithesis of light and darkness is also frequent in the New Testament, particularly in Paul (Rom 1:21; 2:19; 13:11–13; 1 Cor 4:5; 2 Cor 4:6; 6:14). In Paul these figures seem to portray a position or sphere in which one exists by virtue of whether or not that person is in union with Christ.

³¹ Although ἵνα normally introduces purpose, most of the grammarians list this as a rare example of result; cf. BDF, #391.5; Zerwick, #351–52; Moule, p. 142; A. T.

state that the Day may surprise them as a thief ($\omega\varsigma \kappa\lambda\acute{e}pt\eta\varsigma$). In addition to calling these believers $\nu\iota\oim\varphi\omega\tau\oim\varsigma$, Paul also says they are “sons of the day” ($\nu\iota\oim \eta\mu\acute{e}r\alpha\varsigma$). The Day has not yet arrived but believers in Christ are sons of the day already by a form of realized eschatology. Paul’s eschatology for the most part assumes a framework of the aeons, one present and one to come.³² However, for Paul the Christian, the age to come has been inaugurated in the death and resurrection of Jesus who is the first fruits of many to follow (cf. 4:13–14; 1 Cor 15:23). Those who are believers, by virtue of their identification with Christ in His death and resurrection, now live paradoxically in two worlds. Although they still live in the present age there is a sense in which they are a part of the age to come, children of the *Day*. Those, on the other hand, who have not come to the light but still live in darkness will be caught off guard by the Day when it comes. That believers have some kind of relationship to the Day of the Lord seems to be without question. Paul clearly says that when this event breaks into human history those who are in the light and who are sons of the day will not be surprised. He does not say that they will not be surprised *because they will not be here*.

Paul has emphatically stated that Christians and non-Christians belong to different spheres of existence; the former are new creations (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). Having made this clear he can move directly to his purpose, namely, his parenetic concerns. The Christian is able to respond differently than the non-Christian to the apocalyptic situation. The transition to exhortation is made by the Apostle through a tactful change in verse 5b from second to first person (from $\dot{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\acute{e}$ to $\dot{\epsilon}\sigma\mu\acute{e}v$) suggesting that Paul includes himself in the exhortation he offers in verses 6–8.

The introductory phrase $\ddot{\alpha}\rho\alpha \ddot{o}\nu$ in verse 6 is strongly inferential and always indicates a new stage in the argument in Paul (cf. Rom 5:18; 7:3, 25; 8:12),³³ in this case a move to parenthesis. As Best notes, this parenthesis “is based on what Christians are as ‘sons of light.’”³⁴

Robertson, *A Grammar of the New Testament in Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934) 998.

³²Cf. Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 1:20; 2:6, 8; 3:18, 2 Cor 4:4; Gal 1:4; Eph 1:21; 2:2, 7; 3:9; Col 1:26; 1 Tim 6:17; 2 Tim 4:10; Titus 2:12; in Jewish apocalyptic material the eschatological framework which is frequently found is that of the two ages, i.e., the present age which is evil and rebellious (2 Esdr 7:50; 4:27; 6:7–9; 2 Enoch 66:6) and the age to come, or Blessed Age (2 Enoch 58:5; 61:2; 2 Apoc. Bar. 44:12; see also Isa 65:17; Jer 31:10–14; Zech 14:7; Dan 7:22; 12:9, 13); for a good discussion of this concept at Qumran, see E. J. Pryke, “Some Aspects of Eschatology in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” SE, vol. 5, pt. 2 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1968) 296–302; see also Davies, *Judaism*, 317–18 (cf. *Sanh* 10).

³³Best, *Thessalonians*, 211; BAGD, 103.

³⁴Ibid., 211.

While “sons of light” may be a proper designation to the new age, Christians are not yet completely in that age and still have to deal presently with the struggles of this age. Paul thus exhorts these believers to spiritual alertness through a series of hortatory subjunctives. He first exhorts them not to sleep ($\mu\bar{n}\eta\ kathen\delta\omega\mu\epsilon\nu$) but to be awake ($\gamma\rho\eta\gamma\omega\mu\epsilon\nu$) and alert ($\nu\eta\phi\omega\mu\epsilon\nu$) (v. 6). Paul desires them not to sleep because such behavior is a characteristic of this age.³⁵ Instead they are exhorted to exhibit a behavior which is ethically upright.³⁶ In verse 8 Paul reiterates the *indicative-imperative* model. Because the believer is characterized by the Day,³⁷ he is exhorted to be vigilant ($\nu\eta\phi\omega\mu\epsilon\nu$) in view of the coming Day of the Lord.³⁸ Paul’s parenetic focus is quite clear. From the use of the metaphors of *wakefulness* and *sobriety* it is apparent that Paul desires the believer to exhibit a certain character at the Day of the Lord; he is not simply suggesting an attitude of sober awareness of what is happening but moral sobriety. This idea is not uncommon in Paul, particularly in 1 Thessalonians. In 3:13 and 5:23 he writes that the believer will stand “before” Jesus ($\xi\mu\pi\rho\sigma\theta\epsilon\nu$) when the Parousia occurs, and it is His desire that the believer be “blameless” ($\grave{\alpha}m\acute{e}\pi\tauou\varsigma$). This would mean that the Day of the Lord and Parousia impose similar ethical demands on the believer and would also suggest their similarity, if not their identity.

It has been shown that Paul’s purpose in both 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 and 5:1–11 is similar, namely, parenetic. He is not concerned about eschatological details but instead how eschatology relates to ethics. He does not attempt to give any future chronology but instead is concerned about how a future event (the Parousia/Day of the

³⁵BAGD, 388; the figurative nuance is also found in classical Greek with a derogatory sense; the term serves to indicate defective concentration or a deficient action (cf. Plato, *Ion*, 536b).

³⁶B. N. Kaye, “Eschatology and Ethics in 1 and 2 Thessalonians,” *NovT* 17 (1975) 49; $\gamma\rho\eta\gamma\omega\mu\epsilon\nu$ and $\nu\eta\phi\omega$ occur elsewhere in eschatological contexts ($\gamma\rho\eta\gamma\omega\mu\epsilon\nu$: Matt 24:42; 25:13; Mark 13:34, 35, 37; Luke 12:37; 1 Pet 5:8; $\nu\eta\phi\omega$: 1 Pet 4:17); for an excellent discussion of $\nu\eta\phi\omega$ and its eschatological flavor see *TDNT*, s.v., “ $\nu\eta\phi\omega$,” by O. Baurenfiend, 4:936–39; also Evald Lövestam, *Spiritual Wakefulness in the New Testament* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1963) 54. The word was used in non-biblical Greek as *sober* in contrast to *drunkenness* (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1274b); however, in *Corpus Hermeticum* it was used metaphorically for *sober mindedness* (see 133.11; 171.22; in both of these texts the contrast is made with $\mu\epsilon\theta\mu\omega$, also used metaphorically). It would appear that Paul is employing a similar nuance, namely, a sober expectancy in view of the coming Day of the Lord. Moore says that it denotes the “serious responsibility of moral behavior as drunkenness denotes the abandonment of self control and responsibility” (*Parousia*, 74).

³⁷The participle $\xi\ntes$ should be taken as causal.

³⁸The translation “vigilant” is suggested by the military figures employed in v. 8 ($\theta\omega\rho\alpha\kappa$ and $\pi\epsilon\rho\kappa\epsilon\rho\alpha\lambda\alpha\iota\varsigma$).

Lord) affects the present lifestyle of believers. Nevertheless, that each passage (4:13–18 and 5:1–11) is parenetic would certainly not be sufficient to demonstrate literary unity were it not for the fact that each passage deals with the same subject matter, namely eschatology. Thus the similarity in subject matter gives the second basis for advocating the literary unity of the entire pericope.

SIMILARITY IN SUBJECT MATTER

Although Paul began his parenetic discourse in 4:1, he does not discuss eschatology until 4:13. Furthermore, he leaves his discussion of eschatology in 5:12 to address general community ethics. Thus in 4:13–5:11 one might suggest that the same subject and event are described, albeit from two different perspectives. There are, however, two factors which must be addressed in conjunction with this proposal. The first is the structural problem of $\pi\epsilon\rho\dot{\imath}$ δέ in 5:1 and the second is the problem of equating Parousia with Day of the Lord.

According to some, the use of $\pi\epsilon\rho\dot{\imath}$ δέ proposes a sharp contrast in thought, thus introducing a new response to a question asked by the Thessalonian community.³⁹ Others prefer to see it as introducing a shift to new subject without necessarily any reference to a response to a question. For example, Paul Feinberg says:

the connective is not simply δέ but $\pi\epsilon\rho\dot{\imath}$ δέ. The subject need not be so different that they are in contrast, but *there is not simply the continuation of the same subject*. This is Paul's typical way of introducing a new topic (e.g., 1 Thess. 4:9, 13). Paul clearly intends some kind of distinction here.⁴⁰ (Italics added.)

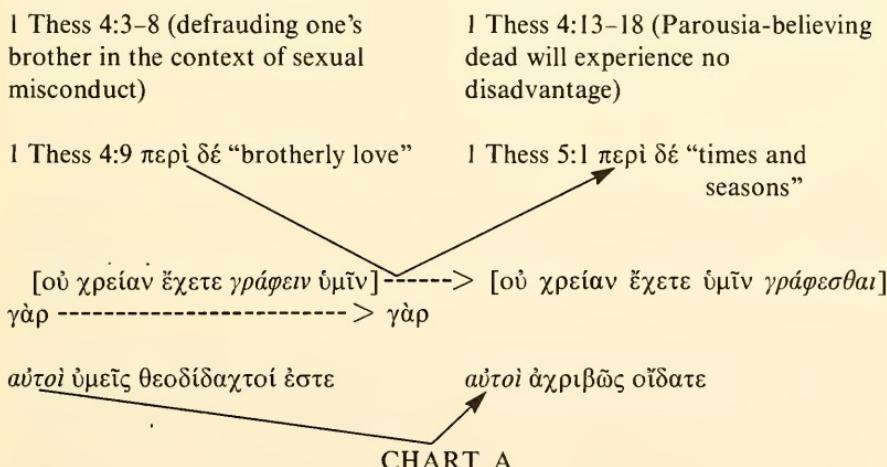
It is puzzling that Feinberg lists 4:13 as an example of the use of $\pi\epsilon\rho\dot{\imath}$ δέ when actually only δέ occurs there. One, however, might agree with some of what Feinberg has suggested. There is a sense in which $\pi\epsilon\rho\dot{\imath}$ δέ does introduce a contrast; particularly in lists of similar things it brings about a clearer separation.⁴¹ However, such does not hamper a proposal of literary unity for the passage. One could easily argue that in 5:1 $\pi\epsilon\rho\dot{\imath}$ δέ does not necessarily introduce a new subject but rather a different ethical concern in light of the same subject, namely, comfort regarding the Parousia in 4:13–18 and exhortation to spiritual alertness in light of the Parousia/Day of the Lord in 5:1–11. Also,

³⁹See C. E. Faw, "On the Writing of First Thessalonians," *JBL* 71 (1952) 217–32; J. R. Harris, "A Study in Letter-Writing," *Expositor*, series 5, 8 (1898) 161–80; the suggestion of a response to a letter is based on the way Paul uses the phrase in 1 Cor 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1 and 16:1.

⁴⁰Feinberg, *Response to Moo*, 226.

⁴¹BAGD, 171.

that Paul continues the same subject might be suggested by the way in which he employs *περὶ δέ* both in 4:9 and in 5:1. In 1 Thessalonians 4:6 Paul warns against transgressing (*ὑπερβαίνω*) and defrauding (*πλεονεκτέω*) one's brother. These activities are the very opposite of "brotherly love" (*φιλαδελφία*), activities that Paul desires these believers to avoid. Paul then picks up the theme of "brotherly love" in 4:9 which he introduces with *περὶ δέ*. He says, "now concerning the *love of the brethren*, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another." Best acknowledges the connection between the preceding discussion, i.e., defrauding a brother, and the concept of "brotherly love" in verse 9. He says, "Here the break must be Paul's movement from a general statement on brotherly love to the nature of that love in a particular situation."⁴² Likewise, in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 Paul writes on the subject of the Parousia. Then in 5:1 he continues the same subject (although now he addresses the *time* of the Parousia) which he also introduces by *περὶ δέ*. He writes, "now concerning the times and the epochs (of the Parousia), brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you, for you yourselves know full well that the Day of the Lord will come as a thief. . ." In both instances (4:9 and 5:1) *περὶ δέ* picks up the preceding theme and reintroduces it with additional discussion. Note the structure indicated in Chart A.



Because *περὶ δέ* is used in 1 Thessalonians 4:9 it is reasonable to look for parallels with its use in 5:1. The chart above suggests that possibility. However, it is also possible that *περὶ δέ* finds a parallel in

⁴²Best, *Thessalonians*, 171; see also George Milligan, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians* (London: Macmillan Co., 1908) 52; he says, "From impurity, which is at

Matthew 24:36. In both 1 Thessalonians 5:1 and Matthew 24:36 περὶ δέ introduces statements that describe the *unknowable* character of the Parousia/Day of the Lord. Also, the fact that Matthew rarely uses περὶ δέ (only here and 22:31) may suggest that the phrase was part of an oral tradition upon which both Matthew and Paul drew and should not be considered simply a stylistic inclusion on the part of each writer. Other parallels in language between 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5 and Matthew 24 and 25 (as will be discussed later) might likewise support this suggestion. If 1 Thessalonians 5:1 and Matthew 24:36 are parallel, this might help to explain how Paul uses περὶ δέ in 5:1. For example, Matthew 24:29–31 describes the coming (Parousia) of the Son of Man. Following this, 24:36 states, “now concerning that day . . .” (περὶ δὲ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης). The obvious question is what day? In 24:37, this is answered by employing the phrase ἡ παρουσία τοῦ νιοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου; here the reference is to the Parousia of the Son of Man, the same event he portrayed earlier in verses 29–31. There is no change to a different subject but instead a shift in emphasis in light of the same subject, namely, the coming Parousia. Matthew, like Paul, also moves to a series of ethical injunctions regarding alertness in view of the unexpected character of the Parousia of the Son of Man (cf. Matt 24:42, 44; 25:13). Hence the literary structure of both Matthew and Paul exhibit interesting similarities.

Although the phrase περὶ δέ remains a problem, it is certainly not overwhelming to the proposed thesis of literary unity. Yet, there is another problem which must be answered if it is concluded that Paul is portraying the same event but with a difference in focus or emphasis; the problem is Paul’s shift in terminology from *Parousia* in 1 Thessalonians 4:15 to *Day of the Lord* in 5:2, 4. Such a difference in terminology might lead to the notion of disparity between the two sections, 4:13–18 and 5:1–11. However, if Parousia and Day of the Lord are references to the same event why does Paul change his terminology?

The basic meaning of παρουσία is either *presence*⁴³ or *arrival*.⁴⁴ In the hellenistic world the word came to have particular associations with the arrival of a central figure. It denoted the ceremonial arrival of a ruler to a city where he was greeted with honors of one kind or another.⁴⁵ The “parousia” was more than the physical act of arrival. It also included the attendant ceremonies with which the ruler was

root so cruel and selfish, the Apostles pass by a subtle link of connexion to the practice of brotherly or Christian love, admitting frankly at the same time the Thessalonians’ zeal in this respect.”

⁴³2 Macc 15:21; 3 Macc 3:17; 2 Cor 10:10; Phil 2:12.

⁴⁴Jdt 10:18; 2 Macc 8:12; 1 Cor 16:17; 2 Cor 7:6–7.

⁴⁵In Tebtunis papyrus 48:14, a description is given of plans “in connection with the king’s visit,” πρὸς τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως παρουσίαν; cf. *Corpus Hermeticum* (Poimandres)

honored.⁴⁶ In the New Testament the word takes on a technical sense for the future advent of Christ. Out of its twenty-four uses in the New Testament sixteen relate to the future advent of Christ.⁴⁷ However, outside of the Thessalonian correspondence, 1 Corinthians 15:23 is the only passage in which Paul speaks of Christ's Parousia.⁴⁸ For this reason Deissmann sees a close association between Paul's use of the word and the technical sense it attained in the hellenistic world.⁴⁹ Yet, it is very possible that Paul conceives of the Parousia in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 as the coming of the Son of Man described in Matthew 24:27, 37, 39. This is suggested by the use of *παρουσία* in both contexts. As Best points out, "in the primitive community Jesus comes to be identified with the Son of Man and since the Son of Man is an eschatological future figure and has to still appear Jesus must return as the Son of Man and in the epistles this is interpreted either as the Parousia of Christ or as the Day of the Lord."⁵⁰ This eschatological coming of the Son of Man involves not only the glorious manifestation of Christ but can also mean judgment.⁵¹ However, in 1 Thessalonians, Paul's use of *παρουσία* has very positive connotations for the believer (cf. 1 Thess 2:19; 3:13; 4:15-17; 5:23).

The fact that the eschatological coming of the Son of Man involved judgment on sinners may explain why Paul shifts his terminology to Day of the Lord in 5:2, namely, because of the judgment motif he introduces in this verse. In the Old Testament the phrase יֹום יְהוָה denotes a decisive intervention of God for judgment and

1.26a; 1.127.17; a similar use is found in Josephus, *Antiquities*, III. 80, 202; IX. 55; XVIII. 284. For a good discussion of this nuance of *παρουσία* see *TDNT*, s.v. "παρουσία," by A. Oepke, 5:858.

⁴⁶ Deissmann notes that when an event of this nature occurred, coins were minted, money was collected, and even in the case of Hadrian, a new era was reckoned (Adolph Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978) 368-73.

⁴⁷ Cf. Matt 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 1 Cor 15:23; 1 Thess 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess 2:1; Jas 5:7, 8; 2 Pet 1:16; 3:4, 12. For a discussion of synonymous terms also used for Christ's future advent, see Gundry, *Tribulation*, 158-59.

⁴⁸ Elsewhere in Paul's letters *παρουσία* always refers to the arrival of a human being; cf. 1 Cor 16:17; 2 Cor 7:6; 10:10; Phil 1:26; 2:12; in the last of these three texts Paul refers to himself; for a treatment of this concept, see Robert Funk, "The Apostolic Parousia: Form and Significance," in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox*, ed. W. A. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule and R. R. Niebuhr (Cambridge: University Press, 1967) 249-68.

⁴⁹ Deissmann, *Light*, 372.

⁵⁰ Best, *Thessalonians*, 350-51; also H. J. Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History*, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959) 102.

⁵¹ L. Cerfaux notes the similarity in descriptions between the eschatological coming of the son of Man in *1 Enoch* and that of Christ (the Son of Man) (*Christ in the Theology of St. Paul* [New York: Herder and Herder, 1959] 36-37, esp. n. 170. The description of the coming of the Son of Man in the New Testament as well as in Jewish

deliverance.⁵² It can refer to a near event or to the final climactic event, although it is not always clear that the prophets distinguished the two.⁵³ Yet, while the Day is frequently described as one of judgment,⁵⁴ deliverance for the people of God is also delineated as part of the Day.⁵⁵ In the New Testament there is great variety of expressions for the Day (which consistently refers to the end of the age) and it is evident that there is no fixed terminology.⁵⁶ The Old Testament idea of the Day of the Lord is thoroughly *Christianized* in Paul and hence the blessing associated with it is directly connected to one's relationship with Christ. Those who are *in Christ* anticipate His *presence* or Parousia whereas those who are *outside of Christ* will be overtaken in judgment, a motif in harmony with the phrase ἡμέρα κυρίου.

The question then is what does this imply regarding the literary unity of 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11? Instead of Paul presenting two different events, it is suggested that Paul is presenting a *single* eschatological event from two perspectives. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 Paul describes this event as a time of blessing for Christians and hence uses the term παρουσία whereas in 5:1–3 he describes the judgment this event brings and thus uses the phrase ἡμέρα κυρίου. Paul's eschatological presentation might be considered *aoristic* in that it says *nothing* about whether these aspects (blessing and judgment) are in actuality on different parts of a chronological time line. Furthermore, he says absolutely *nothing* about a seven year Tribulation period although his presentation certainly allows for it. A challenge can be raised to Gundry who, while equating Parousia and Day of

apocalyptic material is probably under the influence of the Danielic figure in Dan 7; see *1 Enoch* 48:2, 7; 49:2, 4; 51:3; 62:5; 69:27, 29; 71:16. Particularly interesting in this regard is *1 Enoch* 69:26–29 in which the revelation of the Son of Man is described. It is said to be a great blessing for the righteous and judgment for sinners.

⁵²C. H. H. Rowley, *The Faith of Israel: Aspects of Old Testament Thought* (London: SCM, 1956) 178–200.

⁵³Douglas J. Moo, “The Case for the Posttribulation Rapture Position,” in *The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulational?*, ed. Richard R. Reiter (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984) 183.

⁵⁴Amos 5:18–20; Joel 1:15; Isa 13:6, 9; for a good discussion of the “Day of the Lord” in the Old Testament and its connection with judgment, see *TDNT*, s.v. “ἡμέρα,” by Gerhard von Rad, 2:944–47.

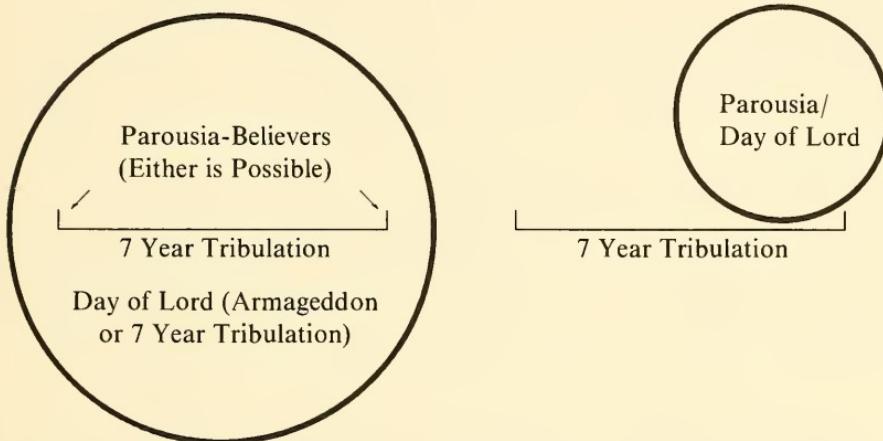
⁵⁵Isa 27; Jer 30:8–9; Joel 2:32; 3:18; Obad 15–17.

⁵⁶Moo lists at least eighteen different expressions that refer to this concept; the most noticeable are: 1) “The day of Christ” (Phil 1:10; 2:16); 2) “The day of our Lord Jesus” (2 Cor 1:14); 3) “The day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:6); 4) “The day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:8); “The day of the Son of Man” (Luke 17:30). It is particularly interesting the way Paul, when referring to the *Day*, can combine “Lord” and “Christ” in one expression (1 Cor 1:8); similarly “Lord” and “Jesus” (2 Cor 1:14). As Moo says, “surely this suggests that since for Paul Jesus Christ is the Lord, he uses terms such as “Day of the Lord” and “Day of Christ” interchangeably,” *Posttribulation Rapture*, 248, n. 27.

the Lord, places these events at the end of the Tribulation period. In other words, he *assumes a Tribulation framework* in his discussion of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11.⁵⁷ However, nowhere does Paul mention the Tribulation. Moo recognizes this and is more cautious in his appraisal, though not disagreeing with Gundry's conclusions. He writes, "The fact that the Tribulation seems not to be part of the Day suggests that it precedes all these events, but this is not certain."⁵⁸ What can be said is that Paul presents the Parousia and the Day as "a general denotation of the great future that dawns with Christ's coming."⁵⁹ Chart B may help to visualize the difference between the proposal offered here and the position of Gundry and Moo.

PROPOSAL

GUNDRY/MOO SCHEME



Exchatological Event—Aoristic

—Paul makes no statement as to where each aspect falls on the time line, however, his presentation allows for either pre- or post-Tribulationism. The presentation is general and unrefined, hence the description "Aoristic."

Eschatological Event—Precisely at the End of the Tribulation

—Paul assumes a 7 year Tribulation and thus is focusing only on the End of this time line. This demands a posttribulational rapture if Parousia and Day of the Lord are equated.

CHART B

⁵⁷Gundry, *Tribulation*, 100-11.

⁵⁸Moo, *Posttribulation Rapture*, 184.

⁵⁹Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outlines of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975) 530-31; cf. also George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974) 555.

Neither the structural problem of περὶ δέ nor the shift in terms from παρουσία to ἡμέρα κυρίου is sufficient to disprove the literary unity of 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11. However, in addition to the fact that Paul's purpose and subject matter are the same in both 4:13–18 and 5:1–11, a third reason can be given which suggests the literary unity of the entire passage.

PARALLELS BETWEEN 1 THESSALONIANS 4 AND 5
AND MATTHEW 24 AND 25

A significant reason to regard 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11 as a literary unit is based on Paul's use of apocalyptic symbols throughout the passage. Many of the symbols which Paul uses can be found in the Old Testament as well as in Jewish apocalyptic material.⁶⁰ However, the imagery Paul uses bears a striking resemblance to the eschatological teaching regarding the coming of the Son of Man in the Olivet discourse of the synoptic gospels, particularly the Matthean form. Although many of the symbols do occur in Jewish apocalyptic, the figures appear in isolated texts but never all together as one finds in the Matthean parallels.

That Paul is drawing on traditional eschatological material is implied by his statement in 1 Thessalonians 4:15 in which he says, "We say this to you by the word of the Lord." A number of solutions have been offered for this difficult phrase.⁶¹ Hill is probably correct when he writes, "May it not mean, as Rigaux and others maintain,

⁶⁰In the Old Testament (with reference to theophanic appearances and the Day of the Lord) one finds references to such imagery as *trumpets* (Exod 19:13; 20:18; Isa 27:13; Zech 9:14) and *clouds* (Exod 19:6; 24:15–18; 40:34; 1 Kg 8:10, 11; Ps 97:2; Ezek 30:3; Dan 7:13; Joel 2:2). For a discussion of the use of contemporary apocalyptic symbolism, see Neil, *Thessalonians*, 98. That Paul is not creating his own imagery can be shown from its occurrence in Jewish apocalyptic material (e.g., the figure of judgment as "travail upon an expectant mother" [cf. 1 Thess 5:3; Matt 24:8] can be found in *1 Enoch* 62:4 which says, "the pain shall come upon them as a woman in travail, and she has pain in bringing forth;" see also 4 Ezra 2:26–32; 4:40, 42. Furthermore, some of the Pauline metaphors, such as *waking* and *sleeping* (cf. 1 Thess 5:6–7) are found also in classical Greek (e.g., Plato, *Symp.*, 203a which says, "God with man does not mingle: but the spiritual is the means of all society and converse of men with gods and of gods with men, whether *waking or sleeping*" [καὶ ἐγρηγορόσι καὶ καθεύδοντι] [Italics added]).

⁶¹J. Jeremias suggests that the phrase refers to an agraphon (*Unknown Sayings of Jesus* [London: SPCK, 1957] 67); J. G. Davies suggests that Paul is using a saying of the exalted Jesus given to the church through one of its prophets (possibly including himself) ("The Genesis of Belief in an Imminent Parousia," *JTS* 14 [1963] 106); Neil states that Paul is drawing from a Jewish or Christian apocalyptic writing (*Thessalonians*, p. 98); Gunther Bornkamm says that the phrase means an apocryphal word of Jesus which came into existence only in the post-Easter church (*Paul* trans. D. Stalker [New York: Harper & Row, 1971] 221).

that Paul goes back, not to a single saying of Jesus but to his apocalyptic teaching as a whole, in order to validate his message and clarify the issues which agitated some of his correspondents?”⁶² In verse 15b Paul states a theological summary of “the word of the Lord” which he then gives in the following verses, drawing on traditional material into which he inserts his own unique material to suit his parenetic purpose.⁶³ Yet, he does not stop at verse 17 in his use of traditional material. He continues until 5:7. In fact, no less than sixteen parallels occur between Matthew 24–25 and 1 Thessalonians 4–5. Note the following parallels:

1. Christ Himself returns (1 Thess 4:16 with Matt 24:30).
2. From heaven (1 Thess 4:16 with Matt 24:30).
3. With a shout (1 Thess 4:16 with Matt 24:30 [in power]).
4. Accompanied by angels (1 Thess 4:16 with Matt 24:31).
5. With the trumpet of God (1 Thess 4:16 with Matt 24:31 [*trumpet* is unique to Matt in the synoptic tradition]).
6. Believers are supernaturally gathered to Christ (1 Thess 4:17 with Matt 24:31; 40–41).
7. Believers meet the Lord (1 Thess 4:17 [ἀπάντησις] with Matt 25:1, 6 [ὑπάντησις and ἀπάντησις]).
8. In the clouds (1 Thess 4:17 with Matt 24:30).
9. The time is unknown (1 Thess 5:1–2 with Matt 24:36); it is interesting to note that *περὶ δέ* introduces both discussions regarding the fact that the time is *unknowable*.
10. Will come as a thief (1 Thess 5:2, 4 with Matt 24:43).
11. Will come at night (1 Thess 5:2 with Matt 24:43 [*night* is unique to Matt in the synoptic tradition]).
12. Unbelievers are unaware of impending judgment (1 Thess 5:3 with Matt 24:37–39).
13. Judgment comes as travail upon an expectant mother (1 Thess 5:3 with Matt 24:8 [cf. RSV]).
14. Believers are not deceived (1 Thess 5:6 with Matt 24:4–5).
15. Believers are to watch (1 Thess 5:6 with Matt 24:42).
16. Warning against drunkenness (1 Thess 5:7 with Matt 24:49).

It should be noted that not only are the principal features of Paul’s discussion found in the Matthean account but even the order is substantially the same. Although there are several places in the parallels

⁶²David Hill, *New Testament Prophecy* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979) 130–31.

⁶³For example, statements in the first person like ήμεις οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι are possibly a reworking of the tradition as well as κύριος instead of an original νίδις ἀνθρώπου, Jeremias, *Unknown Sayings*, 80–83.

in which the material is drawn from what scholars call the traditional Q material (cf. Matt 24:37–39; 43–44) or in which material is unique to Matthew (cf. *trumpet* in Matt 24:31 and *night* in 24:43), there are virtually no places in either Luke or Mark that contain parallels that Matthew lacks. In other words, Matthew contains all the parallels while the other gospels only contain several.

A few observations should be made regarding the parallel symbols. First, these parallels do not begin at 5:1 or at 4:16 and stop at 4:17. Instead, they begin at 4:16 and continue to 5:7. Second, the fact that the parallels are not identical always but do exhibit moderate dissimilarity suggests that underlying both Matthew 24–25 and 1 Thessalonians 4–5 is an early tradition about the Parousia and resurrection with which distinct apocalyptic figures were associated, i.e., trumpet, cloud, thief, and others.⁶⁴ The dissimilarity of the imagery in both accounts may indicate that each writer has used the tradition to suit his own individual purpose. Furthermore, if this is true, it might suggest a tradition which is more dynamic (oral) rather than static (source/document).

The parallels here cited have been noticed by others, especially those of the posttribulational persuasion,⁶⁵ and have been used to demonstrate the similarity between the events of Matthew 24–25 and 1 Thessalonians 4–5. Feinberg has recognized this to be a legitimate problem for pretribulationalism and thus has attempted to respond to it. He writes:

First, that there should be similarities between passages dealing with the posttribulation return of Christ and a pretribulation Rapture of the church should not surprise us. While the two events are different, they are not entirely dissimilar. The two events may be similar, but they are not the same. For me *the fact that there are differences, even if they are not contradictory, is more significant than the similarities*. Second, *the similarities can be maintained only if we understand the passages in their most general sense.*⁶⁶ (Italics added.)

Yet, Feinberg's effort is not convincing. He is quite atomistic in his evaluation of the apocalyptic symbols used and as a result makes

⁶⁴Cf. J. B. Orchard, "Thessalonians and the Synoptic Gospels," *Bib* 19 (1938) 19–42; see also G. Henry Waterman, "The Sources of Paul's Teaching on the 2nd Coming of Christ in 1 and 2 Thessalonians," *JETS* 18 (1975) 105–13.

⁶⁵Cf. William E. Bell, Jr., "A Critical Evaluation of the Pretribulational Rapture Doctrine in Christian Eschatology" (Th.D. dissertation, New York University, April 1967) 249–50; Gundry, *Tribulation*, 102–11; Moo, *Posttribulation Rapture*, 181; 190–96. This writer observed these parallels independent of any of these works in "The Literary and Theological Unity of 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11" (unpublished M. A. thesis, Texas Christian University, 1983).

⁶⁶Feinberg, *Response to Moo*, 225.

some unguarded statements. For example, in his evaluation of the parallel regarding the association of clouds with Jesus' coming he writes, "In Matthew the Son of Man comes *on* the clouds, while in 1 Thessalonians 4 the ascending believers are *in* them."⁶⁷ (Italics added.) However, can one maintain this level of refinement when dealing with such apocalyptic symbolism? It would appear that the gospel writers did not because in the parallel accounts of Mark 13:26 and Luke 21:27 one finds ἐν νεφέλαις and ἐν νεφέλῃ respectively. Both of these phrases have the prepositions ἐν (cf. 1 Thess 4:17 which likewise uses ἐν) in contrast to Matthew's use of ἐπί. Also, there is a distinction between the plural (Mark 13:26) and singular (Luke 21:27) use of νεφέλῃ. It would seem that Feinberg has failed to consider the parallel accounts of Matthew 24:30 in the other gospels. Another example of Feinberg's criticism of parallels between the Olivet Discourse and 1 Thessalonians 4-5 is his evaluation of angels in both texts. He says, "In Matthew the angels gather the elect; in 1 Thessalonians the Lord Himself gathers the believers."⁶⁸ However, an examination of 1 Thessalonians 4:16 reveals that there is not as much dissimilarity as Feinberg suggests. Paul writes, ὁ κύριος ἐν κελεύσματι . . . καταβήσεται, "the Lord will descend with a shout." Following this assertion there are two additional prepositional phrases introduced by ἐν and connected by καὶ. Yet, these two phrases are linked asyndetically to ἐν κελεύσματι and may suggest that the "shout" or "command" is accomplished by means of the "voice of an archangel" (ἐν φωνῇ ἀρχαγγέλου) and "the trumpet of God" (ἐν σάλπιγgi θεοῦ). Marshall supports this contention by saying, "Paul is simply using standard apocalyptic imagery in which *the commands of God can be given through the intermediary of angels* (e.g. Rev. 7:2)."⁶⁹ (Italics added.)

If the parallels are not as dissimilar as Feinberg states, then does the proposal of parallels between Matthew 24-25 and 1 Thessalonians 4-5 demand a posttribulation position as Bell, Gundry, and Moo contend? I would suggest that such an interpretation is not necessarily conclusive. As has been proposed earlier, it is possible that Paul in no way is working with a refined diachronic time scheme but instead is presenting a general eschatological event which has two effects on two qualities of people, believers and unbelievers. This general nature of Paul's eschatological discussion is quite similar to the eschatological presentation of Jesus in the Olivet Discourse. In that discourse there is likewise no clear diachronic scheme but instead the portrayal is

⁶⁷Ibid., 225.

⁶⁸Ibid., 225.

⁶⁹I. Howard Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983) 129.

very general and unrefined. In fact, one could argue that not only is Paul's presentation unrefined but that he has essentially followed the methodology of Jesus in the Olivet Discourse. John A. Sproule, regarding the prophetic methodology of Jesus, writes:

In that discourse (cf. Luke 21:20–28) the Lord describes the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) and the end of the age as though they were both segments of the same historical event even though almost 2,000 years have already intervened between those two events. If one compares Luke 21:20, 21 with Matthew 24:15, 16, it appears to the reader that the surrounding of Jerusalem (taken by almost all as the A.D. 70 event) and the appearance of the "abomination of desolation" (taken by almost all as the event marking the middle of Daniel's seventieth week) are the same event since both are immediately followed by the statement, "Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains" (Matt 24:16; Luke 21:21). Yet they are apparently events separated in time by almost 2,000 years also. In fact, one wonders if perhaps these two events might not actually be a reference to the same event.⁷⁰

Jesus describes the Parousia without placing it on a diachronic time line. He portrays it as an event which will come at the end of the age. Like Paul's presentation in 1 Thessalonians 4–5, Jesus' presentation of His Parousia could be described as *aoristic*. Thus one would expect close similarities between the Matthean and Pauline accounts. Paul was certainly acquainted with the essential content of Jesus' discourses. As Sproule says, "Even though this discursive material may have not been committed to writing when Paul was writing his earliest epistles, it formed a significant portion of the oral tradition with which Paul would be well acquainted since much of the oral tradition had become fundamental to the very early Christian faith."⁷¹

Therefore, it is suggested that the eschatological presentations of both Jesus and Paul are in concord as to their unrefined and general nature and that each describe the Parousia without any commitment to a diachronic time scheme. Both presentations instead are more *qualitative* in nature. If this is true then the parallels between 1 Thessalonians 4–5 and Matthew 24–25 do not necessarily support either posttribulationism or pretribulationism. That would mean that it is possible to embrace the viability of the parallels while still advocating a pretribulational rapture position. Having proposed the viability of such parallels, it is necessary to evaluate how they support the literary unity of the passage under discussion. It is important to note that the parallels with the Olivet Discourse do not occur just in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 or in 5:1–11 but as previously noted, run throughout

⁷⁰Sproule, *Pretribulation Defense*, 148.

⁷¹Ibid., 150.

the entire passage. Furthermore, it should also be observed that these parallels are more than verbal or semantic in nature but are also structural, i.e., they exhibit similar arrangement. For that reason, I would suggest that Paul follows basically the same structure in arranging the parallels as does Matthew. The following table demonstrates the relationship.

Matthew 24 and 25	1 Thessalonians 4 and 5
Parousia Event	Parousia Event
Matthew 24:30 (Son of Man returns from heaven in power)	1 Thessalonians 4:16 (Jesus returns from heaven with a shout)
Matthew 24:31 (Son of Man attended by angels, a trumpet, and the elect are gathered)	1 Thessalonians 4:16 (Jesus attended by an archangel, a trumpet, and the dead in Christ rise)
Matthew 24:30 (Son of Man associated with clouds)	1 Thessalonians 4:17 (Jesus and believers associated with clouds)
Time of the Day Unknown	Time of the Day Unknown
Matthew 24:36 (Nobody knows where the Day of His Parousia occurs; note the use of περὶ δέ)	1 Thessalonians 5:1 (Nobody knows when the Day of the Lord occurs; note the use of περὶ δέ)
Unexpected Nature of the Day	Unexpected Nature of the Day
Matthew 24:43 (the Parousia will occur as a thief in the night—this is the only place in which a parallel fails to correspond in order)	1 Thessalonians 5:2 (the Day of the Lord will occur as a thief in the night)
Matthew 24:37–39 (unbelievers are taken by surprise)	1 Thessalonians 5:3 (unbelievers are taken by surprise)
Exhortations to Watch	Exhortations to Watch
Matthew 24:42* (believers are to watch)	1 Thessalonians 5:6 (believers are to watch)
Matthew 24:29 (believers are warned against drunkenness [spiritual] which is a quality of unbelief)	1 Thessalonians 5:7 (believers are by implication warned to avoid drunkenness [spiritual] which is a quality of the night [spiritual])

*The exhortation to watch is also found in Matthew 25:13 following the parable of the Bridegroom and the Virgins.

If one assumes the essential cohesion and unity of Matthew's presentation of Jesus' discourse without disparity or disjunction (particularly at Matt 24:36), is it not reasonable to assume the same on the part of Paul? For this reason it is suggested that Paul has composed a single, uninterrupted, literary unit in harmony with Jesus' eschatological presentation in Matthew 24–25. The similarity of both verbal and structural parallels with Matthew strongly supports this conclusion.

THE INCLUSIO BETWEEN 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13–14 AND 5:9–10

A final reason for acknowledging literary unity between 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 and 5:1–11 is the striking parallels which exist between 4:13–14, 18 and 5:9–11. These two texts appear to be stylistic brackets or borders for the entire pericope. There are two reasons for arguing that 5:9–11 is an *inclusio* with 4:13–14, 18.

First, it is possible that Paul employs a pre-Pauline credal formula in both 4:13–14 and 5:9–10. In 4:14 Paul writes, Ἰησοῦς απέθανεν καὶ ἀνέστη. The use of Ἰησοῦς rather than the more usual χριστός suggests that Paul is drawing from terminology not customary to his normal vocabulary. Also Paul uses ἀνέστη rather than the more usual ἥγερθη. Paul uses ἐγείρω much more frequently in his letters for resurrection, whether of Christ or of His people, ἀνίστημι being found only here, in 4:16 and in Ephesians 5:14.⁷² On the other hand, ἐγείρω is used forty time by Paul, normally in the passive.⁷³ Interestingly, it appears from patristic citations that ἀνίστημι continued to be used of the resurrection of Christ.⁷⁴ Thus the infrequent occurrence of the terminology in 4:13–14 suggests that Paul is drawing on foreign material. A pre-Pauline credal formula is also suggested in 5:10 by the phrase τοῦ ἀποθανόντος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν. Bruce notes that its similarity in construction to Galatians 1:4 (an articular participle which is equivalent to a relative clause), which Bovon has discerned to be a pre-Pauline formula, might suggest that we are dealing with such a formula in 1 Thessalonians 5:10 as well.⁷⁵ Havener likewise has

⁷²One could argue that ἀνίστημι occurs in Pauline preaching in Acts 17:3. However, the use there may be Lucan since he frequently employs ἀνίστημι (forty four times in Acts alone while using ἐγείρω twelve times).

⁷³Cf. Best, *Thessalonians*, 187; he states that the passive suggests that "Christ is raised by God." However, note M. Zerwick who states a contrary view, *Biblical Greek*, #231.

⁷⁴Cf. Ign. Rom. 4:3 (ἀναστήσομαι); 6:1 (both ἀποθανόντα and ἀναστάντα appear together, the same two words that occur in 1 Thess 4:14); Barn. 15:9 (ἀνέστη, the same form as in 1 Thess 4:14).

⁷⁵Bruce, *Thessalonians*, 113; he cites F. Bovon, "Une formule prépaulinienne dans l'épître aux Galates (Ga 1, 4–5)," in *Paganism, Judaïsme, Christianisme, Mélanges offerts à M. Simon*, ed. A. Benoit, M. Philonenko, C. Vogel (Paris: Boccard, 1978), 91–107.

attempted to argue for pre-Pauline material in 5:10, particularly by an evaluation of the phrase “who died for us,” in verse 10a.⁷⁶ If it is true that Paul is employing a credal formula here as well as in 4:13–14, such would mean that Paul begins and closes his eschatological discourse with a confession that the death of Jesus is the basis for eschatological hope. However, it must be admitted that such an evaluation regarding the pre-Pauline material is somewhat speculative and inconclusive.

There is a second and much stronger reason for the presence of an *inclusio*, namely, the close stylistic and semantic parallels found between 4:13–14 and 5:9–10. Note the structure indicated in Chart C.

1 Thessalonians 4:13–14, 18

v 13

περὶ τῶν χοινωμένων

v 14

εἰ . . . Ἰησοῦς ἀπέθανεν καὶ
ἀνέστη . . . ὁ θεὸς
τοὺς κοιμηθέντας
διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἀξεῖ
σὺν αὐτῷ

1 Thessalonians 5:9–11

vv 9–10

ἔθετο . . . ὁ θεὸς . . .
διὰ . . . Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ . . .
τοῦ ἀποθανόντος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν . . .
. . . εἴτε γρηγορῶμεν εἴτε
καθεύδωμεν
σὺν αὐτῷ ἔζησωμεν

vv 15–17 (Explanatory/Confirmatory)

v 18

Ωστε παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους
(cf. vv 13–17)

v 11

Διὸ παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους
(cf. v 10)

CHART C

⁷⁶Ivan Havener, “The Pre-Pauline Christological Credal Formulae of 1 Thessalonians,” *SBLSPA*, vol. 20, ed. Kent H. Richards (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981) 115; Harnisch has provided the most detailed reasons for a suggestion of a pre-Pauline credal formula in 5:9–10. According to him, the signs of a stereotyped confession or confessional fragment include: 1) the prepositional phrases “through our Lord Jesus Christ” and “for us,” 2) participial style in v. 10a, 3) the introductory δι in v. 9a, 4) the word περιποίησις which is a *hapax legomenon* for Paul, 5) the use of the verb ἔθετο in the aorist, the tense most frequently used in confessional formulae (*Eschatological Existenz*, 122–23). To this Havener adds a sixth reason: the use of ἡμᾶς, since credal formulae frequently employ the first person plural of the personal pronoun (p. 117).

Although the parallels do not exhibit identical order and form, their semantic equivalence throughout argues for intentional parallelism. In each passage the death of Christ ($\alpha\pi\epsilon\theta\alpha\nu\epsilon\nu$ and $\alpha\pi\theta\alpha\nu\alpha\eta\nu\tau\omega\zeta$) is the basis for the believer's hope of life with Him. Each text stresses the believer's presence "with Christ" ($\sigma\nu\nu\alpha\mu\tau\omega$). Each text asserts that Jesus is the intermediate agent through whom God performs the action ($\delta\alpha\dot{\iota}\alpha\ldots\,\mathbf{I}\eta\sigma\mathbf{o}\nu$). Also, God is the author of both actions ($\mathring{\o}\theta\epsilon\dot{\o}\alpha\,\ddot{\alpha}\xi\epsilon\iota$ and $\mathring{\o}\theta\epsilon\dot{\o}\alpha\,\ddot{\epsilon}\theta\epsilon\tau\mathbf{o}$). Furthermore, in verses 13–17 the major problem is the relation of the dead to the Parousia, i.e., verses 13–17 give the essential assertion, followed by an explanation in verses 15–17. Then verse 18 follows with an exhortation "to comfort one another." In the same manner, 1 Thessalonians 5:10 reiterates the same promise of 4:13–17, i.e., the believer will live with Christ, and then verse 11 follows with the corresponding exhortation "to comfort one another." There is, however, one obstacle to the parallelism and that is the identification of the nuance of $\kappa\alpha\theta\epsilon\nu\delta\omega$ in 5:10.

Can $\kappa\alpha\theta\epsilon\nu\delta\omega$ be equated with $\kappa\o\mu\alpha\omega$ in 4:13–14? Paul normally uses $\kappa\o\mu\alpha\omega$ when he employs the metaphor of sleep for the death of the believer.⁷⁷ Furthermore, he uses $\kappa\alpha\theta\epsilon\nu\delta\omega$ for *spiritual insensibility* in 5:6. For this reason, Edgar⁷⁸ and Kaye⁷⁹ have argued that Paul uses the verb with reference to spiritual insensibility in 5:10. However, there is good evidence to the contrary, namely, that Paul uses the verb to mean "death" and hence it is to be taken as a synonym with $\kappa\o\mu\alpha\omega$ in 4:13–14.⁸⁰

First, although $\kappa\alpha\theta\epsilon\nu\delta\omega$ is not used elsewhere by Paul as a metaphor for death, the verb *is* used this way in biblical Greek. Particularly interesting is Daniel 12:2 (LXX) which says, "many of them that *sleep* ($\tau\mathbf{\bar{w}}\nu\,\kappa\alpha\theta\epsilon\nu\delta\omega\mathbf{\bar{v}}\tau\mathbf{\bar{w}}$) in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to reproach and everlasting shame."⁸¹ In fact, in light of the eschatological nature of Daniel 12:2 (cf. $\zeta\omega\mathbf{\bar{h}}\nu\,\alpha\mathbf{\bar{i}\omega\mathbf{\bar{n}}\mathbf{\bar{i}\omega\mathbf{\bar{n}}}$), it is possible that Paul is alluding to it and therefore employs the same terminology (this would not be a problem given the aoristic nature of Paul's eschatological presentation). The verb $\kappa\alpha\theta\epsilon\nu\delta\omega$ is also most likely a reference to death in Mark 5:39, Matthew 9:24, and Luke 8:52. In these texts the account is given of Jesus raising Jairus' daughter from the dead.⁸² One thing, however, is important, namely,

⁷⁷Cf. 1 Cor 7:39; 11:30; 15:6, 18, 20, 51; 1 Thess 4:13, 14, 15.

⁷⁸Thomas Edgar, "The Meaning of 'Sleep' in 1 Thessalonians 5:10," *JETS* 22 (1979) 345–49.

⁷⁹B. N. Kaye, "Eschatological and Ethics in 1 and 2 Thessalonians," *NovT* 17 (1975) 52.

⁸⁰See Tracy L. Howard, "The Meaning of 'Sleep' in 1 Thessalonians 5:10—A Reappraisal," *GTJ* 6 (1985) 337–48.

⁸¹The Theodotion text also uses $\tau\mathbf{\bar{w}}\nu\,\kappa\alpha\theta\epsilon\nu\delta\omega\mathbf{\bar{v}}\tau\mathbf{\bar{w}}$ as a reference to those who have died but who will experience resurrection (see *The Septuaginta*, ed. Alfred Rahlfs [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1935], 935).

⁸²For a full discussion of this point, see Howard, "The Meaning of 'Sleep,'" 340.

the nuance of “death” is not out of concord with the semantic field of the verb καθεύδω. Second, the context of 1 Thessalonians 5:6–8 warrants the nuance of “death” for καθεύδω. To render it simply as “spiritual insensibility” weakens greatly the preceding exhortations. If one did give καθεύδω such a nuance, a paraphrase of verse 10 might be, “although I desire you to maintain spiritual alertness in view of the imminent Parousia, Jesus died so that whether we are spiritually insensible or not, we still might live with Him.” Bruce draws a similar conclusion when he writes, “It is *ludicrous* to suppose that the writers mean, ‘whether you live like sons of light or sons of darkness, it will make little difference: you will be alright in the end.’”⁸³ (Italics added.) The weakening of the previous series of hortatory subjunctives is obvious (cf. vv. 6, 8). Third, Paul has already used καθεύδω in verses 6–7 in two different ways (v. 6 metaphorically and v. 7 literally).⁸⁴ Thus for Paul to give it a nuance of “death” would not be surprising at all since he has previously used the verb with two different nuances in the same context. In fact, he may be employing an intentional word play with the uses in verses 6 and 7. Fourth, the nuance of “death” for καθεύδω in verse 10 is supported by the majority of both commentators and lexicographers.⁸⁵ Finally, as noted above, the numerous parallels which already exist between 4:13–14 and 5:9–10 likewise argue that καθεύδω is parallel to κοιμάω in 4:13–14. Consequently, the probability of an *inclusio* between 4:13–14 and 5:9–10 strongly suggests the essential unity of the entire pericope.

It has been proposed that parallels exist between 1 Thessalonians 4–5 and Matthew 24–25. The suggestion has also been made that Paul employs an *inclusio* between 1 Thessalonians 4:13–14 and 5:9–10. If both of these observations are combined Chart D offers a clear display of the literary unity of the entire passage.

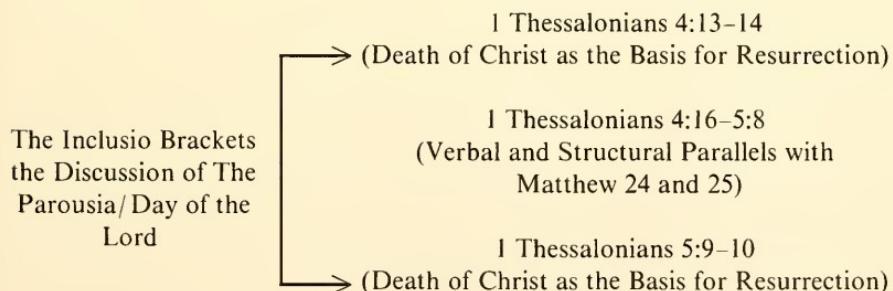


CHART D

⁸³ Bruce, *Thessalonians*, 114.⁸⁴ BAGD, 388.⁸⁵ See Howard, “The Meaning of ‘Sleep,’” 346, n. 25.

It would appear that Paul has bracketed off his discussion of the coming Parousia/Day of the Lord with a reminder that the basis for the hope of believers (both alive and dead) is the death and resurrection of Christ. Such may suggest that this is the main issue behind the entire eschatological discourse. Based on this hope, Paul can exhort these believers to "comfort one another" (cf. 4:18 and 5:11).

SUMMARY

Several reasons have been offered for taking 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11 as one literary unit and not as two distinct units separated by περὶ δέ in 5:1. First, it has been suggested that Paul's purpose is the same in both, namely, parenetic. Paul points out the different effects the Parousia/Day of the Lord will have on those with different spiritual conditions (believers and unbelievers). Second, Paul appears to be describing a single *aoristic* event from two perspectives. For the believer it will be a time of blessing and thus Paul uses the word Parousia, whereas for the unbeliever it will be a time of judgment and hence Paul shifts his terminology to Day of the Lord. The third and fourth reasons are most significant. The parallels exhibited with the Olivet Discourse along with the *inclusio* between 1 Thessalonians 4:13–14 and 5:9–10 support the present thesis, namely, that the entire passage is a single literary unit. Thus there is no reason to regard 5:1–11 either as a non-Pauline interpolation, a passage written later to counter gnostic threats, an example of the literary form *topos*, or as a reference to a different situation and event than that found in 4:13–18.

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF JESUS' NARRATIVE PARABLES: A CONSERVATIVE APPROACH

CHRISTIAN R. DAVIS

Recent structuralistic criticism of Jesus' parables usually uses naturalistic assumptions, but structuralism can also use conservative assumptions about the text. If the Bible is inerrant, then Jesus' parables can be analyzed as they stand as units within the gospels. Underlying structures of the parables can reveal their "deep meanings."

Twenty-seven parables are reduced in five steps to "actantial schemata," then classified into four categories based on the completions or negations of schemata and the relationships between schemata within each parable. Each category teaches a different underlying message. Further structuralistic study might supplement traditional biblical hermeneutics.

* * *

EVER since the disciples asked Jesus, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" (Matt 13:10b), interpreters have struggled with Jesus' parables. Early exegetes, including Tertullian, Origen, and Jerome, generally allegorized them, as did nearly all writers who dealt with them before the nineteenth century. Even in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, critics such as Trench, Dods, and A. B. Bruce continued to treat them as primarily allegorical. In the late nineteenth century, the German theologian Adolf Jülicher proposed that Jesus' parables had to be treated as classical parables, teaching a single, central lesson—a principle that has become widely though not universally accepted. Since then, form critics, such as Bultmann and Dibelius, and redaction critics, such as Cadoux, Dodd, and Jeremias, have tended to treat the parables as human rather than sacred texts, useful, perhaps, in the search for Jesus' original words but not trustworthy as accounts of God's special revelation.¹

¹For a brief survey of interpreters of Jesus' parables, see Jack Dean Kingsbury, "Major Trends in Parable Interpretation," *CTM* 42 (1971) 579–89.

Most recently, experimental hermeneutical approaches have flourished. In a 1983 survey of recent literature, David L. Barr claims that recent studies "form a veritable spectrum of hermeneutical options: from a positivist reading of the text which takes meaning as obvious and referential to a semiotic reading which takes meaning to be polyvalent and autonomous—with several shades in between."² One of these recent approaches is structuralism. Defined in simple terms, structuralism is a critical methodology that seeks to understand phenomena (such as myths, folk customs, or literary texts) in terms of their structures: the systems or patterns that relate individual phenomena to each other. Structuralism has grown out of the linguistic studies of Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson, the anthropological studies of Claude Levi-Strauss, and the studies of simple literary forms (such as folk tales) by André Jolles, Etienne Souriau, and Vladímir Propp. Among the leading proponents of literary structuralism today are A. J. Greimas, Claude Bremond, Tzvetan Todorov, Gérard Genette, and Roland Barthes. Daniel and Aline Patte and Alfred M. Johnson, Jr., have written texts applying structuralistic methods to the Bible.³

Several biblical scholars have attempted to apply these structuralistic methods to Jesus' parables. Such studies published since 1975 include works by John Dominic Crossan (1975), Daniel Patte (1976), "The Entrevernes Group" (1978), Gary A. Phillips (1985), and John W. Sider (1985).⁴ This approach is attractive because the parables—as a set of short, diverse, yet related narratives (like Propp's Russian folk tales and Levi-Strauss's "myths")—provide the kind of material that is most suitable for structural analysis.

Unfortunately, most structuralists assume that the meaning of a text lies not in the text itself but in the culture of which the text is a

²David L. Barr, "Speaking of Parables: A Survey of Recent Research," *TSF Bulletin* 6 (May–June 1983) 8.

³For a general introduction to structuralism, see Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973); Robert Scholes, *Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction* (New Haven: Yale Univ., 1974). For texts on structuralism in Biblical criticism, see Daniel and Aline Patte, *Structural Exegesis: From Theory to Practice* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978); Alfred M. Johnson, Jr., ed. and trans., *Structuralism and Biblical Hermeneutics: A Collection of Essays* (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1979).

⁴John Dominic Crossan, *The Dark Interval: Towards a Theology of Story* (Niles, Ill.: Argus Communications, 1975); Daniel Patte, *What Is Structural Exegesis?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976); The Entrevernes Group, *Signs and Parables: Semiotics and Gospel Texts*, trans. Gary Phillips (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1978); Gary A. Phillips, "History and Text: The Reader in Context in Matthew's Parables Discourse," *Semeia* 31 (1985) 111–38; John W. Sider, "Proportional Analogy in the Gospel Parables," *NTS* 31 (Jan. 1985) 1–23.

part. They claim that the interpretation of any given structure is dependent on culture and is therefore relative, not absolute. As a result structuralism has been applied to Jesus' parables mostly by critics who reject conservative assumptions about biblical inspiration in favor of naturalistic assumptions about the text of the NT. Crossan, for instance, has written that "we have literally no language and no parables of Jesus except insofar as such can be retrieved and reconstructed from within the language of the earliest interpreters."⁵

However, structuralism need not begin with such assumptions. It is a method for analyzing texts which can be applied as well by those who believe that the Bible is inspired and inerrant as by those who see it as a human, fallible document. In fact, structuralistic methodology is inherently neutral, espousing no particular hermeneutical presuppositions. It merely claims that the underlying meaning of a text—whatever that may be—can be revealed by methodical analysis of the structural relationships within the text.

Interpreters who hold to the divine inspiration of the Bible have probably shied away from structuralism both because it has been used mostly by critics with naturalistic assumptions and because of its reductionist tendencies: treating texts as mere linguistic artifacts to be analyzed. However, structuralism is no more opposed to the doctrine of inspiration than is the diagramming of sentences from the Bible (which is itself a structuralistic type of method). Just as diagramming a sentence might help to reveal the meaning of the sentence, so structural analysis of a set of parables might help to reveal the meanings of the parables.

Hence, this paper will attempt to analyze some of Jesus' parables using a structuralistic approach, beginning with three assumptions: (1) that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant word of God, (2) that particular passages in the Bible can be isolated from their contexts and treated as independent units of discourse, and (3) that the structure of a unit of discourse is related to the underlying meaning of that unit. These assumptions need some explanation.

The first assumption is not just a point of faith but also a useful heuristic principle. If the Bible is inspired and inerrant, then the words recorded in the gospels as Jesus' words must represent Jesus' actual words. Therefore, this principle eliminates the approach used, for instance, in Crossan's book *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus*, which compares the variants of each parable in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Thomas (!), decides what must be Jesus' original parables (before their supposed redactions), and then analyzes the

⁵John Dominic Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973) xiii.

structures of these “rediscovered” (if not invented) parables.⁶ However, based on the assumption of inspiration and inerrancy, the present study will analyze Jesus’ parables as they stand. (Their texts as given in the NASB will be used here as adequate approximations of the original texts.)

Furthermore, this first assumption supports the second assumption: particular Bible passages can be isolated from their contexts and treated as independent units. Although attempts to determine how the parables function within the overall structure of the gospels can be valuable (see for instance Elizabeth Struthers Malbon’s 1986 study of this issue),⁷ they are not the only way to approach the parables. If the parables were the re-creations of the gospel authors, they might well be meaningless outside their gospel contexts, but if Jesus himself created and told them, then they can validly be treated as independent units that are contained in a larger context. Hence, they can be isolated and analyzed with valid results.

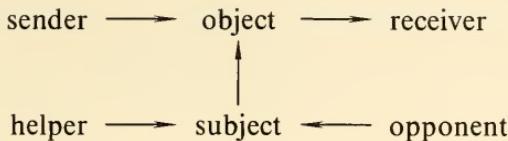
Unfortunately, identifying all of Jesus’ parables is a nearly insurmountable task in itself.⁸ Therefore, this study is limited to only twenty-seven texts, each one a narrative told by Jesus in a past tense (primarily the Greek aorist). (See the Appendix for the list of texts used.) Not included are non-narrative metaphors, such as “You are the salt of the earth” or “You are the light of the world” (Matt 5:13, 14); present- or future-tense narratives, such as the “unclean spirit” (Matt 12:43–45), the “stray sheep” (Matt 18:12–13), or the “sheep and the goats” (Mark 25:31–46); and narratives about historical figures such as David (Mark 2:25–26) or Elijah (Mark 9:13; Luke 4:25–26). All of these texts could be used for structural analyses, but they are excluded here mainly to simplify this study.

The third basic assumption of this study is the foundational principle of structuralism: that units of discourse are built on underlying structures, the discovery of which can reveal the “deep meaning” of the discourse. This “deep meaning” is not simply the interpretation of the text. Rather, it is the underlying pattern or idea that all texts with the same structure elucidate. Therefore, if the texts under consideration, or any subset of them, reveal a common structure, they can be taken as expressions of the same basic idea. In other words, structuralism is used here as a method for finding sets of narratives that all express, in varying ways, a common concept.

⁶Crossan, *In Parables*, pp. 1–34 and passim.

⁷Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, “Mark: Myth and Parable,” *BTB* 16 (Jan. 1986) 8–17.

⁸*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 1955 ed., s.v. “Parable (Introductory and Biblical),” lists counts of Jesus’ parables ranging from Trench’s thirty to Bugge’s seventy-one.



The same actant (human or non-human), may fill several of the six roles shown above, and some roles may be unfilled in any given narrative.

FIGURE 1. A. J. Greimas' Actantial Schema

To identify a text's underlying structure, structuralists have proposed various schemata as foundations for all narratives. For example, Vladímir Propp, one of the forerunners of structuralism, focused on thirty-one "functions of *dramatis personae*," which he saw as elements of the Russian folk tales that he studied.⁹ Later structuralists, such as Claude Bremond and Tzvetan Todorov, have sought simpler paradigms based on the essential action of resolving a conflict.¹⁰ Among the most popular schemata today are the "semiotic square" and A. J. Greimas' "actantial schema."¹¹ The semiotic square is a diagram used to analyze the semantic oppositions of a narrative, pairing some fundamental term with its contrary, its contradictory, and its homologue.¹² Because it deals with semantic elements and because its schematization does not vary (always being a square), the semiotic square does not serve the purpose of this study.

However, Greimas' actantial schema can elucidate the structure of a narrative's action without specifying any semantic levels in the text, and it can reveal a variety of narrative patterns. Hence, it provides a useful paradigm for analysis and classification of the set of texts under consideration. This schema is diagrammed as in figure 1. Greimas' schema is certainly not the only possible paradigm for elementary narratives—it is simply a useful one for the purposes of this study.

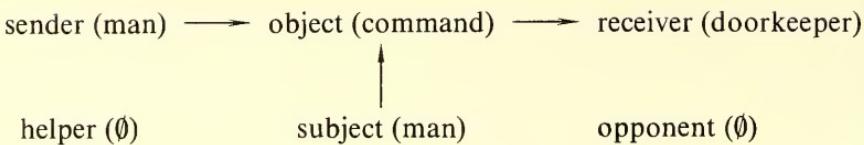
The method for reducing each text to this schema follows five steps. First, a text is identified and isolated from its context in order

⁹Vladímir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, rev. 2nd ed., edited by Louis A. Wagner, trans. Laurence Scott (Austin: Univ. of Texas, 1968), 25–65.

¹⁰Claude Bremond, *Logique du Récit* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1973) 131–33; Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, trans. Richard Howard (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977) 108–19.

¹¹Among critics of Jesus' parables who use these two schemata are Corrina Galland (in Johnson, ed., *Structuralism and Biblical Hermeneutics* 183–208), The Entrevernes Group (*Signs and Parables*), Daniel and Aline Patte (*Structural Exegesis*), and John Dominic Crossan (*The Dark Interval*).

¹²Corrina Galland, "A Structural Reading Defined," p. 186, in Johnson, ed., *Structuralism and Biblical Hermeneutics*.



This diagram represents a simple action in which a man, who is both the originator (sender) and motivator (subject) of a command, gives a command to a doorkeeper (receiver). No helpers or opponents are given. (Other apparent actions in Mark 13:34 are Greek participles and are therefore treated descriptive elements.)

FIGURE 2. Actantial Schema of Mark 13:34

to treat it as a self-contained unit.¹³ Second, the text is segmented, with one segment for each definite action.¹⁴ Third, passages that do not add action (such as descriptive or informative passages) are separated out of the elementary narratives of actions.¹⁵ Fourth, the actors in each segment are placed within actantial schemata. In very simple, one-segment narratives, such as Mark 13:34, this is the final step, resulting in a schema like figure 2. In most cases, a fifth step is necessary: identification of the relationships between elementary narrative segments. The two basic relationships to be identified here are sequence (either casual or temporal—represented by “ \longrightarrow ”) and comparison or equality (represented by “ \longleftrightarrow ”).

Once the texts are reduced to schemata (with letters representing each actor to reduce semantic interference in the isolation of the structure), the patterns of the chosen texts are compared. The criteria for comparison used in this study were the completion or negation of the narrative (i.e., whether the receiver in the schema does or does not receive the object) and the sequences or comparisons of the schemata.

¹³I believe that this procedure is critically justifiable, based on the assumption that the gospel accounts are inspired and inerrant, since Jesus himself delivered several very similar parables (or forms of the same parable) in different contexts: see the narratives of the mustard seed (Matt 13:31–31 and Luke 13:19) and of the marriage feast or the dinner (Matt 22:2–14 and Luke 14:16–24).

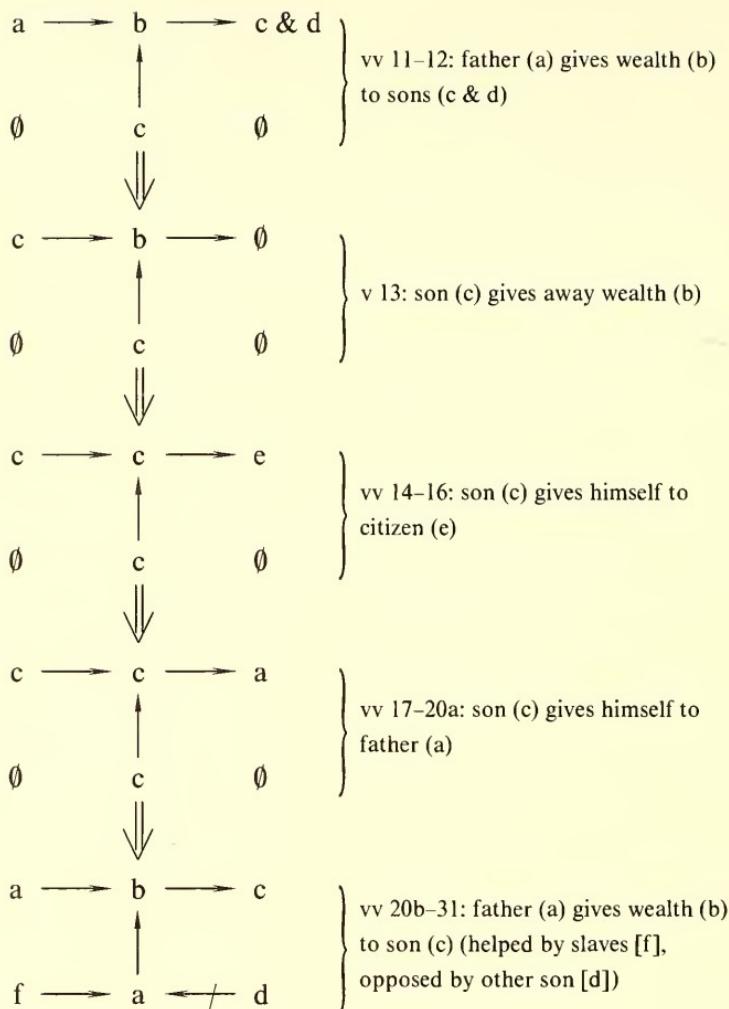
¹⁴Defining a “definite action” is necessarily imprecise because every action can be divided into smaller actions or combined to form larger actions. Thus “the sower went out to sow” may be seen as two actions (going forth and sowing), as a single action (sowing), or as many implied actions (leaving a place, going to a field, entering the field, taking seeds in hand, etc.). Structural analysis must presuppose a general semantic understanding of the text that allows the reader to determine what constitutes each “definite action.” For further discussion, see *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 1987 ed., s.v. “Structuralism,” by Edmund Leach.

¹⁵Galland, “Suggestions for a Structural Approach to the Narrative,” 190, in Johnson, ed., *Structuralism and Biblical Hermeneutics*.

Few texts were identical in structure, and all had some resemblances. In general, however, four classes of narratives emerged. Class A contains only completed narrative schemata with no comparisons involved. Class B is similar but centers on a negated narrative (an act of refusal or opposition). Class C consists of a comparison of two similar narratives: one a completed narrative, the other, negated. Class D uses a sequence of two class-C comparisons, one leading to the other.

Class A is the simplest but is interesting because, unlike most narratives, it involves no apparent opposition, at least in the essential action. (Conflict of values may occur on a semantic level, but for simplicity, this study is considering only actions, not values.) Its pattern is the basic actantial schema (as in figures 1 and 2), with the subject normally the same as either the sender (motivating an act of giving) or the receiver (motivating an act of taking). Texts that fit this class include the narratives of the mustard seed (Matt 13:31–32; Luke 13:18–19), the leaven (Matt 13:33; Luke 13:21), the hidden treasure (Matt 13:44), the pearl (Matt 13:45–46), the laborers in the vineyard (Matt 20:1–16), the traveler putting his slaves in charge (Mark 13:34), the two debtors (Luke 7:41–42), the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32), the unrighteous steward (Luke 16:1–8), and the widow and the judge (Luke 18:2–5). Some of these involve several sequential actions, but all emphasize the transfer of a single object (not necessarily a material object) to a single receiver. Some, such as the mustard seed, the leaven, the hidden treasure, the pearl, and the traveler consist of only one or two closely connected elementary narratives. Others, such as the laborers in the vineyard, the prodigal son, and the unrighteous steward, include a longer sequence of narratives. But all express completed transfers of one object to one receiver. The only one in which an act of direct opposition is expressed is the widow and the judge—which could therefore be put in class B—but because its emphasis seems to be on the final act of giving (i.e., the judge gives legal protection to the widow), it has been placed, at least tentatively, in class A.

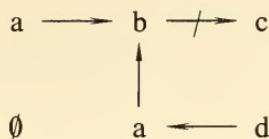
Perhaps the most interesting example in class A is the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32). This narrative includes at least five elementary narratives, but each one is completed: the man gives wealth to his son; the son gives away wealth; the son gives himself to a citizen; the son gives himself to his father; the father receives him and then gives him gifts. Though the older son expresses anger, he never acts out his opposition. A structural diagram with letters for each actor might look like figure 3. The significance of this example is that it shows in an objective way how this relatively complex narrative expresses the same type of pattern (hence the same basic idea) as that in such simple narratives as the mustard seed or the hidden treasure. In fact,



The narrative is represented as a series of completed elementary narratives. Some segments could be united or subdivided; this figure merely approximates the total structure of the parable.

FIGURE 3. Actantial Schema of Luke 15:11-32 (the prodigal son)

by condensing the intermediate segments in the sequence, the narrative of the prodigal son could be reduced to a single, completed actantial schema (like figures 1 and 2) with the father as sender, wealth as the object, the younger son as the receiver, the father and younger son combined as the subject, slaves as helpers, and the older son as an unsuccessful opponent.

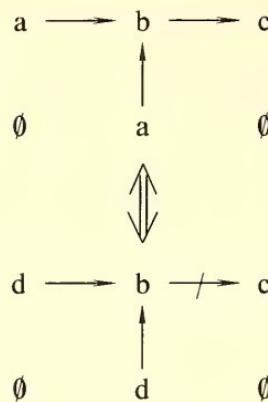


The key element in class B is the segment in which the transfer of the object (b) to the receiver (c) is negated ($\cancel{\longrightarrow}$). There is often opposition (d), and the subject is often the same as the sender.

FIGURE 4. Actantial Schema Typical of Class-B Narratives

Class B is similar to class A in that its narrative segments are arranged sequentially. However, in B, a key segment is a negated narrative, as schematized in figure 4. Examples with this structure are the narratives of the unforgiving slave (Matt 18:23–24), the landowner and the vine-growers (Matt 21:33–40; Mark 12:1–9; Luke 20:9–16), the marriage feast (Matt 22:2–13), the rich fool (Luke 12:16–20), the barren fig tree (Luke 13:6–9), the dinner (Luke 14:16–23), and the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31). In each of these narratives, a key segment—usually the last one—is negated. Thus, the unforgiving slave negates his fellow slave's plea for mercy (Matt 18:30), and the king subsequently negates the slave's plea for mercy (Matt 18:34). In Matt 21:33–40, the vine-growers refuse to receive the landowner's slaves—a negation that implies a further negation of the transfer of fruits to the landowner. (The landowner's destruction of the vine-growers is related in future tense, outside the narrative proper—Matt 21:41.)

An unusual example of a class-B narrative is that of the marriage feast (Matt 22:2–13). Most class-B narratives contain either a single act of negation (as in the landowner and the vine-growers) or a negation leading to a second negation (as in the unforgiving slave). But in Matt 22:2–14, the marriage feast has three basic negations: the guests' rejection of the feast (vv 3, 5–6), the king's subsequent destruction of the guests' city (v 7), and the weakly connected rejection of the man without wedding clothes (v 13). If vv 11–13—the man without wedding clothes—are separated from vv 2–10—the guests' rejection of the feast—the two resulting narratives both fit class B. In light of this apparent structural aberration, a comparison with the similar narrative of the dinner, recounted by Luke (Luke 14:16–23), is useful. Luke's narrative has different details but has essentially the same structure as Matthew's until the end, when Luke's narrative leaves out the man without wedding clothes.



In most class-C narratives, a sender/subject (a) gives an object (b) to a receiver (c), and a different sender/subject (d) fails to give ($\not\rightarrow$) the same object (b) to the same receiver (c).

FIGURE 5. Actantial Schema Typical of Class-C Narratives

While some critics take this variation as evidence of editorial redaction, structural analysis suggests another possible explanation. If, as has been suggested, narratives with the same basic structure express the same underlying idea, Jesus may well have been expressing the same idea in different ways for didactic force. In the context of Matthew 22, Jesus juxtaposes two different expressions of the same idea.¹⁶ (He apparently did the same thing in Matthew 13, where he juxtaposes the narratives of the mustard seed and the leaven and those of the hidden treasure and the pearl.) In Luke 14, in a different context, he used yet another expression for the same idea. If one accepts the premises that different expressions of the same structure communicate the same underlying idea and that Jesus sometimes juxtaposed two different expressions of the same idea, then the unusual structure of Matthew 22 and the variations in Luke 14 are easily explained as normal manifestations of Jesus' uses of narratives.

In class C, two separate narrative segments—one completed and one negated—are compared. Figure 5 shows the basic structure. Narratives of this type include the two foundations (Matt 7:24–27; Luke 6:47–49), the sower (Matt 13:3–8; Mark 4:3–8; Luke 8:5–8), the dragnet (Matt 13:47–48), the two sons (Matt 21:28–30), the good

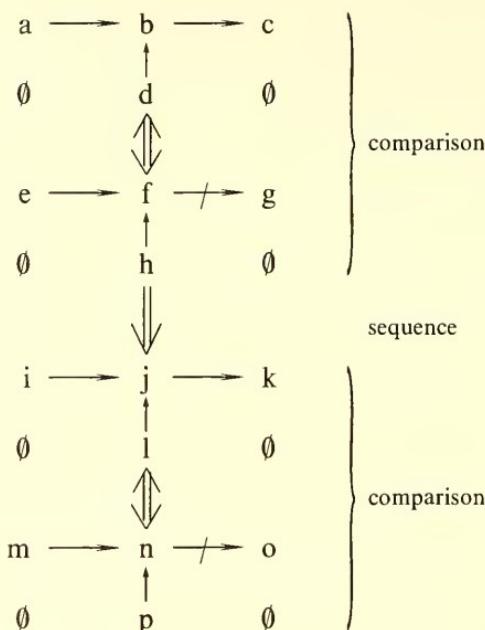
¹⁶Such juxtaposition seems to be typical of the Hebrew mind, as evidenced by the parallelism often used in the Psalms and Proverbs.

Samaritan (Luke 10:30–35), the Pharisee and the publican (Luke 18:10–14), and the minas (Luke 19:12–27). In several cases, such as the sower, the two sons, the good Samaritan, and the minas, there is also a preliminary narrative segment that introduces the comparison, but in each case it is obviously no more than a device to establish the situation (e.g., “the sower went out to sow”—Matt 13:3b). Also, in two cases—the sower and the good Samaritan—the negated narrative is repeated before the final, completed narrative segment occurs. For example, the seeds beside the road, upon the rocky places, and among the thorns all fail to yield a crop before the seeds on the good soil do finally yield a crop. However, the pattern is still essentially a comparison of a negated narrative (which is repeated) with a completed narrative.

Perhaps the most useful fact to notice in Class C is that complex narratives such as the sower and the good Samaritan have the same structure as such simple narratives as the two foundations and the two sons. If the structuralistic method is valid, hermeneutical interpretation should find close similarities among these narratives.

The final class, class D, consists of combinations of classes B and C. In particular, a comparison of completed and negated narratives (as in class C) leads sequentially (as in class B) to another comparison of completed and negated narratives. While the specific narrative roles vary, the basic structure is given in figure 6. There seem to be only three examples of this class in the gospels: the tares among the wheat (Matt 13:24–30), the ten virgins (Matt 25:1–13), and the talents (Matt 25:14–30). This class is the smallest but also the most complex of the four.

One interesting problem in class D lies in a comparison of the narrative of the talents with the class-C narrative of the minas (Luke 19:12–27). As with the marriage feast and the dinner, Matthew and Luke retell two different narratives with obvious structural similarities in two different situations. Matthew's narrative of the talents (told during the Passion Week) is a definite example of class D, with a comparison of the slaves' handling of the talents leading to a comparison of the man's subsequent treatment of the slaves. However, Luke's narrative of the minas (told before entering Jerusalem), while very similar to the second half of Matthew's narrative, leaves out the narratives of the slaves' handling of the money and inserts a seemingly unrelated narrative about the citizens' rejection of the nobleman. Luke's version is probably best seen as a class-C narrative (comparing the faithful slaves' completed narratives with the worthless slave's negated narrative) with an inserted class-B narrative (the citizens' delegation leads to the nobleman's rejection of the citizens). An obvious lesson to be learned here is that the boundaries between



In class-D narratives, a comparison (as in class C) leads to another comparison (as in class C). The same sets of characters usually act throughout the four segments, but the roles of each character may vary.

FIGURE 6. Actantial Schema Typical of Class-D Narratives

the classes are arbitrary and flexible, with one kind of narrative easily combined with or transformed into another.

Such arbitrariness could arouse objections to the method. However, structuralism does not claim to find the only structures or classification schemes applicable to the texts. It only claims to find possible structures and schemes, with the further claim that if they are found by application of consistent rules of analysis, they will reveal patterns that reflect the underlying ideas of the texts. Different rules of analysis may reveal different structures, but if, as this study assumes, there is an absolute truth underlying each text, then any consistent structural analysis of the texts should lead toward that truth.¹⁷

Another possible objection to this study is that the classes of texts and their underlying ideas could be determined by more intuitive

¹⁷The opposite assumption—that there is no absolute truth underlying any linguistic text and that different structures will therefore reveal different ideas—has led to the radical deconstructionist movement.

hermeneutical methods. While this objection has some validity, it misses the point that structuralistic methods do not replace hermeneutical methods but supplement them. Structural analysis attempts to reveal and objectify the linguistic foundations upon which hermeneutical interpretations are built.

In conclusion, although the purpose of this study is only to suggest how conservative Bible scholars might employ structuralistic methods—not to take the further step of interpreting the ideas represented by the patterns that have been identified—a few suggestions for interpretation might help clarify the study's results. For instance, the narratives in class A, whether simple or complex, all reveal a pattern of completed transferral of object to receiver. It may therefore be inferred that in each one, Jesus was emphasizing an act of giving. Hermeneuts can determine what is given, by whom, to whom. (God's gift to man of eternal life is an obvious possibility.) Class-B narratives all emphasize a negated act. Again, hermeneuts can determine what is negated and what the negative force (the opposition) is. (Rejection of salvation because of man's sinful nature is a possibility.) Class C reveals two equal but opposite forces: a dualism that seems to be part of Jesus' message (perhaps distinguishing two types of people, such as the regenerate and the unregenerate). Class-D narratives seem to reveal the consequences of oppositions between the two groups identified in class C (probably God's rejection of the unregenerate).

These suggestions reveal nothing new or surprising; however, that does not mean the method is unsuccessful. On the contrary, new or surprising results, contradicting established interpretations, would make the method suspect at best. Yet this study has shown that structuralism can work within conservative assumptions about the Bible to reveal new ways of looking at Jesus' narrative parables. Further uses of structuralism in biblical study could be almost limitless. Undergraduate Bible students might find elementary structural exercises helpful for developing their analytical skills. For advanced students, much more detailed analysis of Jesus' narratives remains to be done, and other biblical narratives, such as accounts of miracles or dreams, the gospels themselves, the apocalyptic visions of Daniel or Revelation, or the historical accounts in the OT or Acts might contain significant structural patterns. Though more difficult to analyze, non-narrative passages such as didactic discourses and poetic passages can be approached structurally. In short, the entire Bible is open ground, largely untouched by structural analysis, at least insofar as conservative theologians are concerned. With increasing refinement of our methods, structuralism may help us to refine our understanding of God's word.

APPENDIX

LIST OF TEXTS USED

Class A

mustard seed	Matt 13:31–32; Luke 13:18–19
leaven	Matt 13:33; Luke 13:21
hidden treasure	Matt 13:44
pearl	Matt 13:45–46
laborers in the vineyard	Matt 20:1–16
traveler putting his slaves in charge	Mark 13:34
two debtors	Luke 7:41–42
prodigal son	Luke 15:11–32
unrighteous steward	Luke 16:1–8
widow and the judge	Luke 18:2–5

Class B

unforgiving slave	Matt 18:23–34
landowner and vine-growers	Matt 21:33–40; Mark 12:1–9; Luke 20:9–16
marriage feast	Matt 22:2–13; Luke 14:16–23
rich fool	Luke 12:16–20
barren fig tree	Luke 13:6–9
dinner	Luke 14:16–23
rich man and Lazarus	Luke 16:19–31

Class C

two foundations	Matt 7:24–27; Luke 6:47–49
sower	Matt 13:3–8; Mark 4:3–8; Luke 8:5–8
dragnet	Matt 13:47–48
two sons	Matt 21:28–30
good Samaritan	Luke 10:30–35
Pharisee and the publican	Luke 18:10–14
minas	Luke 19:12–27

Class D

tares among the wheat	Matt 13:24–30
ten virgins	Matt 25:1–13
talents	Matt 25:14–30

A BACKGROUND HISTORY OF GRACE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

RONALD T. CLUTTER

Grace Theological Seminary was born in an era of contention in the American church. The Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy which divided major Protestant bodies affected also the Brethren Church. Alva J. McClain, a Brethren leader of Fundamentalist bent, envisioned a graduate seminary for his denomination. As a result of pressures for such a school, a seminary was established at Ashland College but was not received enthusiastically. Seven years of tensions, Fundamentalist-Modernist and Fundamentalist-Brethren, resulted in the dismissal of Dean McClain and Herman A. Hoyt and the founding of a new seminary for the Brethren.

* * *

INTRODUCTION

THE Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy of the 1920s and 1930s resulted in division within different American Protestant denominations. One of the smaller bodies to suffer rupture was the Brethren Church, itself the result of a schism dating back to the 1880s. Unable to settle its difficulties, the new denomination divided in 1939.¹ At the center of the conflict was Alva J. McClain with two fruits of his labor—Ashland Theological Seminary in Ashland, Ohio, and Grace Theological Seminary in Akron, Ohio, later to locate in Winona Lake, Indiana.

The existence of the graduate theological seminary for the Brethren Church had its origin in the mind of McClain. He envisioned an institution which would perpetuate and defend the distinctions of the Brethren. His dream became a reality and then developed into a

¹For an excellent discussion of the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy as it affected the Brethren Church, see Dale Stoffer, "The Background and Development of Thought and Practice in the German Baptist Brethren (Dunker) and the Brethren (Progressive) Churches (c. 1650–1979)," (Ph.D. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1980) 571–619 and 680–739.

nightmare. Attempting to blend the basic tenets of Brethrenism and Fundamentalism, McClain became embroiled in conflict which resulted in his dismissal from Ashland and efforts to establish a new seminary.

MCCAIN'S EARLY LIFE AND MINISTRY

Born in Aurelia, Iowa, on April 11, 1888, to Walter Scott and Mary Ellen Gnagey McClain, Alva J. McClain was raised in the Brethren Church. Moved to Arizona and Washington as a youth, he attended the University of Washington but did not graduate from that institution. Converted under the ministry of Louis S. Bauman, McClain enrolled at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles where Reuben A. Torrey, a friend of Bauman, served as dean. He continued his education at Xenia Theological Seminary, a Presbyterian institution with an evangelical emphasis. Having satisfied residence requirements for the Th.M. degree, McClain subsequently finished his B.A. work at Occidental College in Los Angeles. Ordained a minister of the Brethren Church, he served as pastor of the First Brethren Church of Philadelphia from 1918 to 1924.

While at Philadelphia, McClain became embroiled in a denominational controversy. In a period of tension for many Protestant bodies, the Brethren Church found itself confronted with theological modernism in its ranks. Before the liberalizing influence had gained a foothold in the denomination, action was taken. The "Message of the Brethren Ministry," to which McClain was a primary contributor, was adopted by the National Ministerial Association in 1921. This document was opposed by some members of the denomination who represented the traditional Brethren aversion to creeds. One of these opponents was John Lewis Gillin, former president of Ashland College, who was serving as a member of the board of this Brethren institution. Through the influence of Gillin and a small number of others sharing his ideas, doctrine was deemphasized and social concerns magnified. Gillin allowed great latitude in doctrine, a matter which concerned many Brethren. The "Message of the Brethren Ministry" affirmed the infallibility of the original manuscripts of the Bible, the pre-existence, deity and virgin birth of Jesus as well as His vicarious atonement through the shedding of blood. Justification was recognized as coming through the faith of the individual, not by works, though works served as an evidence of justification. McClain listed four results of this doctrinal declaration:

First, it provided a rallying point for the evangelical ministers of the church, and was widely endorsed and used by congregations, district conferences, and ministerial examining committees. Second, a number

of liberally inclined ministers left the Brethren Church and entered other denominations. Third, Dr. Gillin stopped attending the General Conference, and the few remaining ministers who had supported the "liberals" suffered a marked decline in influence. Fourth, the churches temporarily at least gained a larger voice in the affairs of Ashland College, and began a definite agitation to place on its faculty more men of unquestioned loyalty to the great truths of the Christian faith.²

McClain joined the faculty of Ashland College in 1925.

MCCLAIN AT ASHLAND COLLEGE

Ashland College, in Ashland, Ohio, was chartered in 1878 and was reincorporated under the Progressive Brethren, later the Brethren Church, in 1888. The college served, among other purposes, to train men for ministry. A seminary department was begun in 1906. A graduate of the seminary program received an undergraduate degree of A.B. in Divinity. McClain taught for two years in the seminary program. Before he accepted the duties at Ashland, he clearly expressed his thinking about the seminary department in a letter to J. Allen Miller, dean of the Bible department. McClain affirmed that the "seminary" could not prosper until independent of the college program with its own faculty and extracurricular program. He hoped to see such a program begun if only with one teacher. Though recognizing the importance of the college ministry, he emphasized that he wished to have his duties limited to the "seminary," declaring that he would rather teach elsewhere or return to the pastorate than teach in the college.³ He had written previously to Edwin E. Jacobs, president of Ashland College, expressing the need for a graduate seminary and his desire to teach only in the seminary program because of his conviction that students would not favor sitting at the feet of the same teacher for the seven years of college and seminary education.

Four years of the same mannerisms, the same jokes, the same ideas, the same methods, is quite enough for the average intelligent student. This, to me, at least partially explains why the Ashland student speaks highly of the College but often refers to the Seminary as a "joke." It is not a reflection upon the Seminary professors, but the College takes the best from them, and leaves the residue for the Seminary.⁴

²Alva J. McClain, "The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary," in *Charis: The History of Grace Theological Seminary, 1931-1951*, ed. John Whitcomb (Winona Lake, IN: Grace Theological Seminary, 1951) 12.

³Alva J. McClain to J. Allen Miller, 8 July 1925, McClain files, Morgan Library, Grace Schools, Winona Lake, Indiana.

⁴Alva J. McClain to Edwin E. Jacobs, 25 May 1925, copy, McClain files.

Not realizing his desires for a seminary, McClain departed from Ashland in 1927. He wrote of his concern about the situation:

In the first place, the restriction of the "seminary" work to a mere major in the college was continued by the administration with no apparent serious interest in placing it on a graduate basis. Second, the best ministerial students were becoming ambitious for advanced theological training and were beginning to look toward other schools for such work on a graduate level. Some were giving up their proposed "Bible majors" to work for the regular Bachelor of Arts degree so as to lay the necessary basis for entrance to the standard theological seminaries. Third, because it had become clear that "liberal" tendencies in life and faith still existed on the campus, the environment there did not seem at the time favorable for the establishment of the kind of theological school needed by the Brethren Church.⁵

THE INFLUENCE OF LOUIS S. BAUMAN

Upon leaving Ashland, McClain went to BIOLA where he taught courses in Christian doctrine for two years while continuing to formulate plans for "a theological seminary which would embody certain educational objectives and ideals which he felt were not being fully realized in any existing school at the time."⁶ He wished to see a wedding of theological seminary scholarship with the spiritual warmth and practical emphasis of a Bible institute. With this ideal in mind, McClain consulted with Louis S. Bauman, who had helped bring him to salvation and whose church he had attended in Long Beach, California.

Plans for a Seminary

Bauman had served the denomination long and well as a pastor, evangelist, prophecy conference speaker, and strong advocate of missions. He started the First Brethren Church of Long Beach in 1913 and under his pastoral care the congregation grew to be the largest in the denomination. Bauman shared McClain's concern for quality Christian education and plans were made for the establishment of the seminary McClain desired. In response to a letter from Jacobs in which the Ashland president expressed interest in McClain's return to that school, Bauman wrote:

A number of people here in the church, and out of it, have in mind the beginning of a real seminary here in Long Beach. There are young men who might make great and useful servants of the church, if the Lord

⁵ McClain, "The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary," 12.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

shall tarry, who have not the means to go far away from home and spend years in preparation. And since the situation exists in the Bible Institute of Los Angeles as it does, they have not the enthusiasm for that institution they once had. We believe that if we can secure Brother McClain here for the organization and developing of a work, that helpers for him can be secured and that the money will be forthcoming. In fact, we have this in mind in the building of our new building. Of course, we have not in mind the running of a school that will give degrees, or anything of that sort. It will be of the nature of a Bible Institute, and perhaps a seminary in embryo. McClain has a tremendous influence and "pull" here in Southern California, and if we can make terms with him, we believe that something worth while can be done. We would not want to do anything, however, that would detract from our interests in the seminary at Ashland.⁷

Concern about location

This news of potential competition was not welcomed at Ashland which was facing evaluation by the Ohio College Association and the North Central Association for accreditation. The Ohio association was concerned about the lack of faculty members who held doctor's degrees. The association also would not recognize theology teachers in the count of college faculty members.⁸ McClain had no doctor's degree and, if rehired by Ashland, would be another theology teacher who could not be recognized by the Ohio association. At the same time the need to find more faculty personnel put a financial burden on the school. One positive result of the situation is that Kenneth Monroe and Melvin Stuckey, who had been teaching in the college and the seminary department, were no longer to teach college courses. The separation of college faculty and seminary faculty had come about by state requirement. The pressure to add McClain to the Ashland faculty continued to be applied by Bauman.

In June, 1929, he again mentioned in a letter to Jacobs the possibility of a seminary at the Long Beach church. He stated:

One of the best men in the Bible Institute has expressed a desire to join McClain here in such a work, and we are being promised considerable help from outside the Brethren Church if we will undertake such a work, with McClain at the head of it. McClain is the most popular man that the Bible Institute has had on its Faculty in recent years, and with him at the head of a seminary here, we would not want for students. We might want for funds.⁹

⁷Louis S. Bauman to Edwin E. Jacobs, 23 April 1929, copy, McClain files.

⁸Edwin E. Jacobs to Louis S. Bauman, 30 March 1929, copy, McClain files.

⁹Louis S. Bauman to Edwin E. Jacobs, 27 June 1929, copy, McClain files.

The problem of finances was not viewed as insurmountable for the possibility of outside help existed. Bauman continued:

When Dr. Chafer, from Dallas, Texas, was here, we talked the matter over with him, and we find that the Evangelical College at Dallas [later renamed Dallas Theological Seminary] has a mind to extend its work by placing branches of that school, under efficient teachers, at various points in the United States. Such an institution is greatly needed in Southern California—that is, an institution with the faith and the ideals of the Evangelical College at Dallas. If we could keep McClain here, I am sure that Dr. Chafer would look favorably upon the proposition, and the Long Beach Church would be glad to furnish the building facilities.¹⁰

Bauman repeated his point of previous correspondence that the work in Long Beach was not meant to be a challenge to the ministry at Ashland but that it was to meet the needs of those who could not or wished not to leave the west. He also emphasized his desire to see McClain at Ashland if such a situation were possible. He added: "I know only too well that if McClain could be persuaded to return to Ashland, and you should see the wisdom of making him Dean of the seminary, it would greatly strengthen the Brotherhood's support of Ashland College."¹¹

Jacobs responded to Bauman, presenting both his desire for McClain and his dilemma.

Here is the situation. We need him here and ought to have him here. More than that, no one would object to his being Dean of the Seminary. Brother Miller and I understand that fully. However, here is the situation.

We have about forty people in the seminary. Three full-time teachers, none of whom have full work. Monroe, Miller, and Stuckey, all three do not have a complete load of hours. How we could bring a fourth teacher here in the Seminary, even if we had the money, is more than I could understand. If it were possible to take Prof. Miller into the College, we could do that, but he would not qualify for that. I hope to see you at conference and talk the matter over with you because I feel that the future of the church very largely depends on the leadership in the Seminary here. Dean Miller is getting old. I think we need a younger man. He also feels the same way.

I do not see my way clear now to make a more definite statement. Would it be possible for McClain to edit our Sunday School literature and preach in our local church while we wait further developments? If one of the three Seminary men could be shunted to other work for the

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

church, it would open a way for McClain, but you see this is an exceeding delicate situation.

I note what you say about the Seminary on the coast. Naturally I would rather not see it because I would rather have McClain here and regret that McClain did not stay when he was here. I am inclined to think in time the seminary there would militate against the work here nor could it ever have high scholastic recognition without considerable outlay of money, equipment, etc. I would be much better pleased and I think the church would be better served if a way were provided to bring McClain here and in the Seminary.¹²

In the fall of 1929, Charles H. Ashman, Sr., unofficially communicated to McClain in behalf of the Ashland College Board of Trustees their desire that he come to serve that institution as seminary dean. The trustees were considering a separate seminary faculty and hoping that eventually a seminary building could be constructed. It was the proposal of President Jacobs that McClain come as dean in light of the fact that Miller had agreed to step down from the post. Ashman concluded with a statement of concern.

The more I think about it, the better I become convinced that it would be suicidal right now to attempt any removal of the Seminary from Ashland. I have been in Ashland twice since Conference. I have sounded out the Seminary Students and almost universally the sentiment is for a change of Dean and Program, but at Ashland. I have sounded out the Pennsylvania Conference, one of the largest in the Brotherhood, and almost without exception the overwhelming conviction is that the Seminary must stay at Ashland. I am persuaded that any attempt to remove it would actually split the Brethren Church. My thought and plan is to make the necessary changes and put across the aggressive program, thus building the Seminary up to that point of power at which it can assert itself and make demands. Then, if at a future hour we see that it cannot be developed as it ought without removal, we would be in a position to do something. But, right now, I believe it would be most unwise.¹³

THE PROBLEM OF ACCREDITATION

Jacobs' Concern

Jacobs was caught between the desire of the Board of Trustees for McClain, which desire he himself expressed, and the requirements of the North Central Association regarding Ashland. He was convinced that a seminary as a separate school on the Ashland campus

¹²Edwin E. Jacobs to Louis S. Bauman, 3 July 1929, McClain files.

¹³Charles H. Ashman to Alva J. McClain, 5 November 1929, McClain files.

would require a separate endowment from that of the college in order to comply with North Central Association rulings. He was concerned also that North Central would not accept any graduate degrees offered by the seminary.¹⁴ A week later, Jacobs wrote to W. S. Bell, endowment secretary of Ashland College, that there could not be two schools at Ashland with two separate faculties and two seats of potentially conflicting authority.¹⁵

The Ashland president also corresponded with Bauman about the importance of Ashland College. He wrote: "The Seminary is no more important than [sic] the Arts college for a church to try to live today apart from a College is as foolish as it is impossible."¹⁶ He then added:

I assume the attitude that both [college and seminary] are important. Mason, Anspach, DeLozier and other [sic] are as important to the future life of the church as the seminary teachers could possibly, [sic] if I may make a comparison. More than this, they are doing as much for the church as the seminary teachers, not in the same way, but as important and they must have equal consideration with the other departments of the school.¹⁷

He closed by declaring: "I hope I have not spoiled the day for you. I have not yet told you half. Still, may be prayer and faith, and good sense will prevail. At least I hope so."¹⁸ Jacobs was concerned that failure to gain North Central accreditation would result in the loss of a number of the best and most qualified teachers at Ashland. He wrote about plans for a seminary: "If we can keep all we have gained through 50 years of toil and pain and then add to our work, then I should be heartily glad. But if we stand to lose more than we gain, then I should be rigorously opposed."¹⁹ He stated: "In Ohio there can be no school without NC recognition. All others are doomed."²⁰

McClain's View

McClain was not concerned primarily with the same issues as Jacobs. Not being in the difficult position of the president, nor sharing his perspective on accreditation, he did not think as Jacobs did. For McClain, college training was no longer sufficient for pastors and a seminary must be built.

¹⁴Edwin E. Jacobs to W. S. Bell, 4 December 1929, copy, McClain files.

¹⁵Edwin E. Jacobs to W. S. Bell, 10 December 1929, copy, McClain files.

¹⁶Edwin E. Jacobs to Louis S. Bauman, 11 January 1930, McClain files.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Edwin E. Jacobs to Alva J. McClain, 1 March 1930, McClain files.

²⁰Ibid.

The best of our young men today are anxious to have an adequate theological education, which means that it must be graduate work for the most part. We are not at present providing for such education, and therefore must go elsewhere to get it. The years will prove this to be a disastrous policy for the Brethren Church. The College authorities should either provide for this advanced institution at the College, or else permit the Seminary to be established elsewhere.²¹

He added:

The more I hear of the North Central the more I am convinced that if the Seminary is to remain on the College campus, it should be a separate school. With all the grief you are having with their dictation in College matters, why should we try to run a Seminary under their direction since the best interests of the Seminary do not require such jurisdiction? According to your letters, I do not think you would be sweating to secure the North Central recognition if the continued functioning of the College did not require it. Why should we drag the Seminary through the same trouble when it is unnecessary?²²

For McClain, North Central approval was unimportant.

The test of an adequate theological seminary is not some standard erected by a set of men who are antagonistic to historical Christianity, but rather this—Does our Seminary adequately prepare our men for the task to which they have given their lives? Namely, for the ministry of the Gospel in the Brethren Church. For this purpose, the approval of the North Central means precisely nothing.²³

W. S. Bell, formerly McClain's pastor at Sunnyside, Washington, came to Long Beach and discussed the matter of a seminary. According to McClain, talks with Bell resulted in three proposals: (1) that a standard seminary course be established at Ashland with three full-time teachers along with Miller, (2) that the seminary dean have full jurisdiction in seminary matters and (3) that McClain be called as seminary dean.²⁴ While Jacobs was expressing reservations about a seminary at Ashland, Bell was convinced that the college and seminary could not be maintained separately at the present time without the loss of the college and that "to preserve our educational work, we must pull together until such time as it may seem best and we are able to do otherwise."²⁵ Bell later wrote expressing hope that Bauman and McClain would meet with the board of trustees of the college on

²¹ Alva J. McClain to Edwin E. Jacobs, no date, McClain files.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Alva J. McClain to Kenneth M. Monroe, 23 February 1930, copy, McClain files.

²⁵ W. S. Bell to Alva J. McClain, 4 March 1930, McClain files.

April 22. By that time the North Central action, which did result in approval for accreditation, would be known.

MCCLAIN'S PROPOSAL FOR A SEMINARY

Unable to comply with the April 22 date, Bauman and McClain requested that the trustee meeting be rescheduled. The meeting was held on April 24, 1930. McClain gave a detailed presentation including the need for a seminary, reasons that the seminary should not be located at Ashland and some important conditions should a seminary be established on the Ashland campus.

The Need for the Seminary

The need for a seminary of the Brethren Church was based on the awareness of the need of graduate education for pastors. McClain raised the question: "If it is worthwhile to ask a young man to spend three years in intensive study in the field of biology to prepare for teaching that subject, is it asking too much to require three years of intensive study in the field of Christian Truth from those who expect to teach it? The preacher is not required to know everything, but at the very least we have a right to expect him to know his Bible. And it takes time and diligent application to attain this goal."²⁶ He expressed a sense of urgency when he declared the need for a Brethren seminary education program.

If we do not provide it, our best young men will go elsewhere to secure it. Some have already made application to enter other seminaries. No denomination can eventually succeed by a policy of training its ministers in the theological seminaries of other denominations. It may work in individual cases, but as a policy it means disaster.²⁷

He supported his point by stating that no presently existent denominational seminary would give "our men training in the distinctive positions of the Brethren Church" and that seminaries which try to have a trans-denominational appeal "are careful to avoid any teaching which would antagonize their distinctive positions. But such an education is negative."²⁸ McClain averred: "It is not enough that our ministers are not deprived of their distinctive beliefs, but they should be *confirmed* in those beliefs and so *fortified* that they will be able to propagate them in competition with those of an opposite belief. This

²⁶ Alva J. McClain, "The Need for a Brethren Theological Seminary," presented to the Board of Trustees of Ashland College, Ashland, Ohio, 24 April 1930, McClain files.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

can be done only in our own Seminary.”²⁹ He also saw the denominational unity which could be realized through the influence of one seminary rather than the variety of voices of influence if pastors would come from a variety of institutions. His concluding point was worded carefully:

Finally, the Brethren Church as a separate denomination is doomed without an adequately trained ministry which is enthusiastic for our message. Competition is keen, union is in the air, and modernism is dissolving all differences. It will do no good to point to what has been done in the past. The past is gone. The church must face the present situation. And when it comes to a correct diagnosis of the present need, the pastors who are on the firing line know more about it than anyone else.³⁰

Concern about Location

Concerning the site for the establishment of a seminary, McClain concluded that though there were advantages to having a seminary on a college campus, there were many disadvantages. A spiritual atmosphere necessary for a seminary was not possible on an Arts college campus where seminary students were a minority. The denominational thrust should be at the foreground of a seminary while such was not the case with an Arts college. Goals of an Arts college were often identified with material success while such was not to be the priority of seminarians. The matter of the distractions of a college campus and the different emphasis on social life, extra-curricular activities and chapel services also argued for two separate campuses. The seminary campus could uphold the Christian ministry as the supreme calling, something difficult in a college emphasizing a variety of professions. McClain was concerned also with possible deviations from seminary doctrines by the college faculty. “The case might be different if the theological professors were acknowledged as authorities within their own field, but strange to say almost every teacher seems to feel perfectly competent to speak dogmatically in matters of theology.”³¹

McClain voiced a concern that he had stated in an earlier year when he reminded the trustees that seven years on the same campus were too many, especially when the campus was small. Students would yearn for a new location. Limitations on opportunities for practical application of seminary teaching existed in Ashland. There

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Alva J. McClain, “The Location of the Seminary,” presented to the Board of Trustees of Ashland College, Ashland, Ohio, 24 April 1930, McClain files.

were also few opportunities for hearing leading preachers in Ashland. In addition to these concerns, McClain thought that the college "situation is demoralizing to the best interests of ministerial training in the Brethren Church."³²

Conditions for a Seminary at Ashland

In light of these difficulties, it seemed inappropriate for a seminary to share the Ashland campus. However, such a marriage of college and seminary could take place and certain conditions would assist to bring about a harmonious relationship. His suggestions included: (1) making the seminary department of the college a separate standard seminary, (2) establishing a faculty of at least four professors, (3) investing the seminary dean with complete jurisdiction in seminary affairs similar to the authority of the president in the college, (4) ranking seminary professors with a Th.M. on equal scholastic standing as Doctors in the college, (5) understanding that the arrangement of sharing the campus was "an experiment for the present," (6) planning for financial autonomy for the seminary, (7) publishing an annual seminary catalogue and a seminary bulletin, and (8) establishing a seminary committee on the board of trustees with the seminary dean as an *ex officio* member.³³

The Proposal Accepted

McClain reported the decision that followed. "After considerable discussion of the proposals as set forth by Professor McClain, although there was some apparent hostility on the part of the college administration and its sympathizers on the board, nevertheless, with no dissenting vote, the proposed plan for the seminary as a graduate school of the college was approved by the trustees."³⁴ The newly accredited college was not ready to extend welcome arms to the seminary. The college was struggling financially and had just completed an arduous and successful attempt for accreditation. There was fear that the seminary would tax school resources too greatly and possibly affect Ashland accreditation negatively. On the other hand, the existence of a Brethren seminary apart from the Ashland campus would rival it for the limited funds of the Brethren Church.

McClain concluded that "the administration hesitated to consent to the establishment of the seminary elsewhere since it would attract

³²Ibid.

³³Alva J. McClain, "Tentative Seminary Program," presented to the Board of Trustees of Ashland College, Ashland, Ohio, 24 April 1930, McClain files.

³⁴McClain, "The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary," 33.

the financial support of the churches, most of which were more interested in training students for full-time Christian service than in merely supplementing the secular educational facilities already existing in half a hundred other institutions in the State of Ohio."³⁵ Though there were reservations in the minds of some Ashlanders about the existence of a seminary, it was concluded that if such a seminary were to exist, it must exist at Ashland.

ASHLAND THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OPENS

In the fall of 1930, Ashland Theological Seminary began its ministry with four students and a faculty of four. J. Allen Miller was listed as dean and as a teacher in the New Testament Department. McClain served officially as associate dean and professor in the Department of Theology and Christian Evidences as well as teaching some English Bible courses. Stuckey offered instruction in the Homiletics and Practical Theology Department and Monroe served in the Department of Old Testament and Hebrew. The regular course of study consisted of at least ninety semester hours "of intensive study in strictly Biblical and theological subjects" leading to the Bachelor of Theology degree.³⁶ There was no tuition fee assessed to the student, and McClain anticipated the possibility of free dormitory accommodations.³⁷ A special student aid plan was devised in conjunction with Ashland College.

For each year spent in the College preparing for the Seminary work, the student will have set aside to his credit the sum of one hundred dollars. Thus at the end of the four year College course the ministerial student will have accumulated a fund of four hundred dollars, and this money will be paid to the student in six equal payments during his three years in the seminary at Ashland.³⁸

The fourfold emphasis of the school was "orthodox belief, spiritual living, thorough scholarship, and practical application."³⁹

Emphasis at Ashland still was placed upon the college. Ashland trustee, George T. Ronk, argued for this point.

Since we can only absorb three or four new men a year in the ranks of the ministry, it is apparent that we must consider the interests of one

³⁵Ibid., p. 18.

³⁶Alva J. McClain, "The New Seminary Program," *The Brethren Evangelist* 52:22 (31 May 1930) 6.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid., 6-7.

³⁹Ibid., 7.

hundred times as many of our young people, not preparing for the ministry. It is utterly futile to prepare highly trained Brethren ministers to preach to our congregations, then make no effort to hold the loyalty of the young people in the congregation who go into secular work by training them also in our college. For every student we make provision in our Theological Seminary, we have one hundred students, also Brethren young people, who must be prepared to meet the great issues of life by proper training in the atmosphere of a Christian college.⁴⁰

The seminary enjoyed growth in its first years. Ten students enrolled in 1931 and eighteen in 1932, all but one being Brethren. The enrollment stabilized with twenty students in 1933, seventeen in 1934, eighteen in 1935 and twenty-four in 1936–37.⁴¹

PROBLEMS DEVELOP BETWEEN SCHOOLS

McClain's Concerns

Fears that McClain had expressed about locating the seminary in the college environment were realized. He later wrote of the “cool reception on the campus, and occasional open hostility.”⁴² In his annual report to the Board of Trustees on April 25, 1933, McClain sought to evoke a concern about the difficult situation without making specific charges.

Since the Church commits its ministerial students to the College for a period of four years (one year longer than the Seminary has them), a very grave responsibility rests upon the College teachers. Upon their own personal attitude will depend largely whether or not the student comes to the Seminary with his life purpose intact or seriously damaged. Does the teacher manifest a genuine enthusiasm for the Christian ministry as a high and divine calling? Does the student find out that this is so? Or is the attitude one of indifference and even tinged with hostility for “theologians?” Or does the teacher leave the whole matter studiously alone? Students, I would remind you, soon reflect the attitudes of their teachers in these manners. And the result may be tragic. One student may enter the Seminary with a listless purpose, while another comes with a violent antagonism toward College education. I think the Board should give some serious consideration to this matter. I have tried to present it as generally as possible.⁴³

⁴⁰George T. Ronk, “The Ten-Year Forward Program for Ashland College,” *The Brethren Evangelist* 52:22 (31 May 1930) 2.

⁴¹Herman A. Hoyt, “The Academic History of Grace Theological Seminary,” in *Charis: The History of Grace Theological Seminary, 1931–1951*, ed. John Whitcomb (Winona Lake, IN: Grace Theological Seminary, 1951) 41.

⁴²Alva J. McClain, “The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary,” 20.

⁴³Alva J. McClain, “Annual Report to the Board of Trustees at Ashland,” 25 April 1933, McClain files.

In his concern about the seminary being located at Ashland, McClain had asserted that the chief emphasis of the seminary was spiritual whereas that of the college was intellectual. He stated: "An alumnus of the College receives special notice for scholarship, but not as a rule for the number of men won to Christ."⁴⁴ It must be remembered that McClain had attended a Bible institute (BIOLA) and had graduated as valedictorian of his class at a liberal arts college (Occidental). It had been his desire to have a seminary where a Bible institute atmosphere prevailed. That was not the situation at Ashland.

McClain also was concerned about doctrinal deviation. Students were reporting some of the disturbing statements made by college faculty members. Homer A. Kent, Sr., remembered a conversation concerning "questions that were put to him by one young man from his church who was greatly disturbed by some things to which he had listened in the classrooms at Ashland."⁴⁵ Herman Hoyt described his experiences as a student at Ashland College:

Upon entering the sophomore year of study, I was almost submerged in what I call unbelief. In the psychology class the professor demanded that the Bible be excluded from the room, whereupon he proceeded to openly deny any supernatural reality to the new birth, saying that every man comes to a place in life where he turns over a new leaf. The professor of zoology sneeringly mocked at the words in Lev. 17:11 which say that the life of the flesh is in the blood. Upon another occasion, he flaunted the words of Christ in John 10:10 where Christ declared that He came to give life and give it more abundantly.⁴⁶

Charges were registered about the teaching of evolution, though there is debate as to whether evolution was espoused by faculty members or simply presented as one theory of science.⁴⁷

Call for a Doctrinal Statement

McClain took steps to help create the atmosphere he thought was necessary. Having been involved previously in the writing of the "Message of the Brethren Ministry" to which subscription was made by the ministerium, McClain proposed to the board "the adoption of an official statement of faith as a standard by which the fitness of

⁴⁴ Alva J. McClain, "The Location of the Seminary," presented to the Board of Trustees of Ashland College, Ashland, Ohio, 24 April 1930, McClain files.

⁴⁵ Homer A. Kent, Sr., *Conquering Frontiers* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1972) 140–41.

⁴⁶ Herman A. Hoyt, "A Personal Testimony and an Explanation," *The Brethren Evangelist* 61:14 (8 April 1939) 15.

⁴⁷ Dennis Martin, "Ashland College Versus Ashland Seminary (1921–37) Prelude to Schism," *Brethren Life and Thought* 21 (Winter 1976) 43–44, 49.

teachers could be determined.”⁴⁸ This proposal was not received well by the administration but the trustees established a committee for the purpose of drafting a doctrinal statement. McClain wrote the original statement for committee consideration. It covered “fundamental Christian doctrines held in common by most evangelical believers, but omitting the distinctive doctrines of the Brethren denomination because at least half the college faculty were members of other denominations.”⁴⁹ The seven points of the proposal pertained to Scripture, person of God, person and work of Christ, person and work of the Holy Spirit, man, salvation and Christian character and conduct. McClain recollected:

The adoption of the “statement” was bitterly fought by the college officials, but when it became evident that it would pass, the president agreed to accept it and guarantee its adoption by the faculty *if the board would not require each teacher to sign it.* The hour was late, the members were tired, and the compromise was accepted.⁵⁰

While the Seminary published the statement of faith in its annual catalogues beginning in 1933, the college catalogue did not include it. The college faculty had passed a motion adopting the confessional statement but the majority of its members did not vote.⁵¹ It could be expected that Jacobs would not be positive toward the doctrinal standard because “he was in accord with the traditional Brethren antipathy to creeds.”⁵² A confrontation existed in which each of the two parties considered its position best for the church: the one opting for the Brethren heritage of non-subscription to creeds, represented by Jacobs, and the other the product of the theological turmoil of the modernist-fundamentalist conflict and calling for adherence to a doctrinal statement in order to maintain orthodoxy in the church. The seminary faculty reflected the latter approach.

Administration Tension

In 1934, many problems existed at Ashland. The *Ashland Times-Gazette* of April 25 reported on page one:

Dr. E. E. Jacobs was again chosen president of Ashland College by members of the board of trustees last night. He resigned as president and asked the board to elect Dr. C. L. Anspach, dean at Michigan

⁴⁸ McClain, “The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary,” 21.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Martin, “Ashland College Versus Ashland Seminary,” 43.

State Teachers College, who refused to accept the position. Following Dr. Anspach's refusal, Dr. Jacobs was reelected head of the institution.

Reference is made in the newspaper article to the trustees' failure to take action "on a student request that 'a more extensive social program be outlined which shall include college dances, properly chaperoned by members of the faculty.'" The report continues:

A third plank in the student program that "more definite lines of cleavage be drawn between the arts college and the seminary" was not fully settled. Instead of a greater difference between the two departments, Dr. Jacobs believes that a greater union will help solve the problem. The graduate seminary students take no part in student activities, Dr. Jacobs said. The question of control of student activities is between students in the arts college and preseminary students, who are in the minority. The arts college majority, it is believed, can take control of student activities without action by any board.

The McClain perspective was summarized: "Among the college students there was much discontent, many preseminary students being disturbed by anti-Biblical attitudes in certain classrooms; while on the other hand the worldly majority were clamoring for greater liberty than allowed by the somewhat feeble rules."⁵³ Jacobs, apparently growing weary of complaints from McClain, wrote to his seminary dean:

I note that you find some criticism about the Arts College but I want to assure you that I have made as many apologies for the Seminary as you possibly could have made for the College.

The Seminary is by no means above criticism.

There is a grwoig [sic] feeling on the part of a good many good people that the Arts college should not at all be dominated by the teachings of the Seminary and I am of the opinion that the NC [North Central Association] will recommend that the two organizations be further separated.

I am as tired of apologizing for the Seminary as you could possibly be for the Arts College.

So far as the teachers are concerned, I shall do the best I can but I will not promise anyone that I will only employ those on which everyone may agree, as I have already found that to be impossible.

You are no more interest [sic] in the institution than I so no one need have any concern about my integrity or sincerity [sic]. That has been demonstrated long before the seminary was here.⁵⁴

⁵³McClain, "The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary," 22.

⁵⁴Edwin E. Jacobs to Alva J. McClain, 21 May 1934, McClain files.

An undated copy of a letter to the president and board of deans from "Members of the Graduate School of Theology" expressed what that group felt to be the answer to the college students desirous of campus dances.

We would recommend the correction of this evil by the inauguration of a definite evangelistic and soul-winning campaign. Feeling that only the Spirit of God can ultimately solve this problem, we suggest that one of America's leading evangelists and Bible scholars be brought into this place where he is so greatly needed. It is our ardent desire that you as the administrative body of this institution will feel constrained to take whatever steps may be necessary to deal effectively with the tendency toward unchristian amusements, and to this end make definite plans, in the near future, for a campaign on the campus having as its objective the deepening of the spiritual life and the winning of souls for Christ.⁵⁵

A NEW PRESIDENT AND NEW HOPE

Possibly wearied by the conflict and by the financial problems resulting from the economic depression, Jacobs resigned the presidency in 1935 and Charles Anspach accepted the position. McClain saw a bright ray of hope in this appointment. Anspach had written to the seminary dean sharing concerns about Ashland College.

Dr. Jacobs seems to have had a change of heart now that the time is here for him to leave. He doesn't want to leave but wants to stay if I come back. We discussed all angles of the situation and I told him plainly what the future of the institution was to be if all groups agreed to my program. I told him that if stayed [sic] he must consider the fact that we would reorganize with a strong tendency toward the Wheaton viewpoint. I told him I thought in that direction there was hope and none in the direction of liberalism. I wanted him to see that we intended to do certain things and that he might not be happy in such an institution. As a result of the conference we came to the following agreement:

1. He will resign at the next meeting of the board.
2. He is not to teach his classes in such a manner as to embarrass the seminary. I told him that he could not go on saying things which would cause us embarrassment with the seminary and the church. He admitted that he said things he had no business to say and that he would hold his peace.

⁵⁵"Members of the Graduate School of Theology to the President and the Board of Deans—Ashland College," no date, copy, McClain files.

3. I told him that the statement of faith would be printed in the next catalogue. He agreed.
4. I told him we would reorganize with the Wheaton viewpoint.
5. I told him we expect to contact conservative men in all denominations.⁵⁶

Anspach, in turn, agreed that Jacobs be given the title of president emeritus with the salary of a dean. He was to have a semester leave of absence when possible and have a permanent position with the understanding that he would do nothing to embarrass the institution.⁵⁷ McClain responded with a declaration of agreement with Anspach's general policy. He had reservations about the arrangement made with Jacobs, stating that it was his "conviction that we shall find in the Church a rather widespread opposition to his staying here under any terms."⁵⁸ However, McClain was willing to bow to the wishes of Anspach in the matter.

At the board meeting in 1935 at which Anspach was appointed president, a second appointment of importance was made. Herman A. Hoyt was named professor of New Testament and Greek, taking the position left empty as a result of the death of J. Allen Miller. McClain's report to the board at the 1935 meeting was specific in stating what he perceived to be problems in the college which were in need of correction.

The baneful influence of fraternities which have been permitted to grow up without any semblance of control.

Faculty worldliness, including addiction to cigarettes [sic], cards and movies.

Tolerance toward smoking and dancing by the students and arousing antagonism among such students by shifting all responsibility for rules upon the Board of Trustees.

Drinking and public drunkenness [sic] among students, with no apparent serious attempts to investigate thoroughly and discipline.

Contemptuous attitude toward the church and its ministry, with attempts to influence men away from preparation for the ministry.

Questioning the truths of Christianity, and the teaching of the dogma of evolutionism.

Systematic denunciation of the Seminary as being responsible for the difficulties here, the reduction in teachers' salaries, the existence of disliked rules of conduct, etc.

Attempts to discredit the character of the Seminary work by claiming to students that it has "no academic value."

⁵⁶C. L. Anspach to Alva J. McClain, 11 February, 1935, McClain files.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Alva J. McClain to Charles L. Anspach, 15 February 1925, copy, McClain files.

Spreading reports throughout the community that the Seminary teachers are trouble-makers, disloyal, and leaders of a faction which is opposed to the college, as such.⁵⁹

Difficult as these circumstances were for McClain, what he called the “most serious blow” was the forbidding of Seminary teachers to give instruction in any Bible classes in the college, thus closing some courses. It was communicated to McClain that North Central authorities required the move, which statement proved to be without substance. Also stopped was the practice of allowing college students to take Bible classes in the seminary for college credit. McClain took the matter as a personal slap.

The only reason I have been able to get for this absurd action, apart from the North Central story, was that neither Professors Monroe and Stuckey nor myself were academically fitted to teach even a freshman Bible class. I need not tell you that it is highly unpleasant to work in an institution where one is under a complete academic ban.⁶⁰

On the other hand, McClain reported to the board that the seminary faculty was convinced that the situation would be improved greatly under the new president. Anspach’s proposed program was one “we have believed in and prayed for through the years of our association with it [Ashland].” He continued:

And I would like to add the every difficulty that has ever arisen between Seminary and College administration has had to do, either directly or indirectly, with Christian Faith and life. No other problem exists. Our battle is not over men, but over truth. We do not hate men; we do hate untruth and error. And we do not propose to surrender when it arises. If you expect us to, do not ask us to remain here.⁶¹

MCCLAIN HOPES DASHED

Presidential Actions

The optimism entertained by McClain and the seminary faculty was dashed quickly. Anspach’s inauguration included speakers alleged by the seminary faculty to be modernists. The president opposed a campaign formulated by pre-seminary students to distribute tracts on the school campus. At the 1936 board meeting, Anspach proposed

⁵⁹ Alva J. McClain, “Report of the Dean of the Seminary to the Board of Trustees,” Ashland College, Ashland, Ohio, May 1935, McClain files.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

two standards of conduct: one, more restrictive, for the seminary and a second group of standards allowing more latitude in social activities for the majority of the Ashland campus.⁶² McClain concluded:

No president ever began his administration at Ashland College with so complete a united support of his church constituency, or with such unreserved approval for his avowed program. Yet within a few months the new president's almost cynical violation of his solemn promises had precipitated a conflict which virtually wrecked the seminary at *Ashland*, lost to the college at least half its church constituency, and led to division of Brethren churches into two national conferences. To be sure, one man by himself could not have done all of this. There had been existing differences, some trivial, and others more serious, but none that could not have been handled without such far-reaching results if the actions of Dr. Anspach had been tempered with more wisdom and good will.⁶³

Anspach proposed to the board of trustees a plan for increasing its membership from thirty-six to forty-two members. The six members to be added were to be drawn from non-Brethren sources. The proposal included a stipulation that not more than a third of the board membership could be drawn from any one particular profession, "a provision which the seminary faction interpreted as aimed at the ministers who make up half of the Board's membership."⁶⁴ Dennis Martin has stated:

But by far the most far-reaching change concerned the selection of all the trustees. Until 1927 thirty-three trustees had been nominated by the district conferences and elected by the Board. In that year the Board amended the procedure to permit direct election by the district conferences. Anspach now pointed out that this procedure was contrary to the college charter and proposed a new constitution which would firmly anchor the pre-1927 procedure. The Board would now elect its new membership from district nominations and become self-perpetuating.⁶⁵

Denominational Response

Two members of the Board of Trustees, Louis S. Bauman and Charles A. Ashman, both from Southern California, resigned over the issue of the "double standard" of conduct for students. News of

⁶²McClain, "The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary," 25.

⁶³Ibid., p. 24.

⁶⁴Martin, "Ashland College Versus Ashland Seminary," 45.

⁶⁵Ibid., 45-46.

the events of the board meeting soon reached the Southern California district. The result was a very long letter dated June 16, 1936, from The Ministerial Board of Southern California calling for Anspach to explain his attitudes and actions at the board meeting. A reply was expected by June 27. Anspach was involved with district conferences in Ohio and Indiana which made it impossible for the reply sought. The Ashland president wrote Paul Bauman, secretary of the Southern California ministerium.

I have gone through your statement very carefully and if my motives are as bad as the report would indicate, you have every reason to be concerned about me. I assure you, however, that I am not as bad as the report might indicate.

After giving the matter considerable thought, I believe it would be inadvisable to try to handle the matter by correspondence, for correspondence at long range in the clarification of interpretation is exceedingly difficult. Inasmuch as we are all interested in clarification of viewpoints, it is my suggestion that if my statement in the *EVANGELIST* is insufficient, that a group of your men meet with a group of Board and Faculty members and go over the entire matter. Such a meeting, I believe, would eliminate much of the present misunderstanding.⁶⁶

Anspach's explanation in *The Brethren Evangelist* contained information that purposed to show the difficulty of enforcing a rigid code efficiently.

The college shall encourage that type of behavior which shall be in conformity with Christian standards. It does not permit on campus, dancing, card playing, smoking, etc., and discourages such practice off campus. It does now, however, pledge all students to refrain from such practices off campus, as a condition of entrance. Sixty-five percent of our students live within twenty-five miles of the college and approximately fifty percent live in their own homes. Under such circumstances we cannot require that all students live the completely separated life.⁶⁷

Due to Anspach's failure to reply to the pastors as requested, the Southern California body printed the letter and distributed it throughout the churches under the date of July 31, 1936.⁶⁸ Kent records the response:

⁶⁶C. L. Anspach to Paul R. Bauman, 25 June 1936, copy, McClain files.

⁶⁷C. L. Anspach, "A Statement Relative to Ashland College," *The Brethren Evangelist* 58:25 (27 June 1936) 15.

⁶⁸Kent, *Conquering Frontiers*, 146.

The public revelation of the letter acted as a bombshell, rocking the Brotherhood from coast to coast. Viewpoints were quickly formed. Animosities were aroused. Articles on both sides of the question began to appear in the *Brethren Evangelist*.⁶⁹

The General Conference of the denomination began its annual meeting on August 24. Albert T. Ronk wrote: "Never had the general annual gathering of the Brethren Church been more agog—more tense than this 1936 conclave. The 'Open Letter' from Southern California had out-fire-branded Samson's foxes and its authors were present to add faggots to the fire."⁷⁰ He also summarized conference action.

A series of motions passed the floor of the disturbed assembly.—(1) That Ashland College charter be read to the Conference. (2) That a committee of seven be created "to thoroughly investigate the condition which is causing the disturbance at this conference." (3) That the conference disapprove the proposed amendment of the College Trustees to increase their membership to 42 by adding six. (4) That the "*Conference table the motion to vote confidence in President Dr. Chas. Anspach and the entire administration of Ashland College*".⁷¹

The investigating committee membership consisted of R. D. Barnard, C. A. Stewart, William H. Schaffer, Jr., Roy Patterson, R. F. Porte, H. V. Wall and E. H. Wolfe. Barnard was made chairman. In October, Anspach wrote to Barnard informing him that the investigating body must await an invitation from the Board of Trustees before it could visit the campus and that the trustees would not meet until March or April.⁷² Barnard sent a letter to members announcing his resignation due to his lack of optimism regarding the possibility of the committee accomplishing its task.⁷³ Patterson also resigned. Wall was a member of the Ashland board and, therefore, could not serve very well as an investigator. Porte, Stewart and Wolfe did not participate in the investigation. Schaffer alone attended the June 1, 1937, meeting of the board which made decisions that had not been anticipated and which would rock the church.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Albert T. Ronk, *History of the Brethren Church* (Ashland, OH: Brethren Pub. Co., 1968) 420.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²C. L. Anspach to W. [sic] D. Barnard, 2 October 1936, Barnard files, Morgan Library, Grace Schools, Winona Lake, Indiana.

⁷³R. D. Barnard to "To Whom It May Concern," 12 February 1937, Barnard files.

THE CLIMACTIC YEAR: 1937

Faculty Confrontation

Early in 1937 a confrontation had taken place on the Ashland faculty concerning the proposal of certain regulations to govern that body. McClain reported the events:

This code provided, among other things, that "a member of the teaching staff may be dismissed . . . for inefficiency or neglect of academic duty, immorality, or conduct unbecoming to a gentleman." Dean McClain moved the addition of another cause for dismissal, namely, "*for teaching anything contrary to the college Statement of Faith.*" This motion was quickly defeated by a loud chorus of "No's." Pointing out the seriousness of this action, Dean McClain asked that his own affirmative vote be made a matter of record. Prof. Herman Hoyt made the same request. Someone moved that *all* the votes be so recorded, but the motion was overwhelmingly defeated. At this point the late Dr. L. L. Garber, no mean parliamentarian, informed the chairman that anyone could demand a roll-call vote. Instantly Professor Hoyt made the demand, and the roll call began. It happened so quickly that the opposition had no time to collect its wits, and the chairman simply moved with the tide. Otherwise the issue might never have come to a clean-cut public decision, as it did, with no escape for anyone.

The second name called in alphabetical order was that of the president himself. Dr. Anspach made an angry speech against the application of the college Statement of Faith and voted an emphatic "No," after which there was no longer any uncertainty as to the safe way to vote. When the vote was finished, only *five* votes were recorded as favoring the application of the Statement of Faith. Three of the votes were cast by the Seminary teachers—Hoyt, McClain, and Stuckey.⁷⁴

Board Action

When the board convened it followed the plan of electing its own members rather than receiving appointees from the various districts. Ashman and Bauman, having resigned membership the previous year, returned as representatives from Southern California. The board chose two other men and refused to seat Ashman and Bauman.

McClain presented his report as dean of the seminary. He reminded the trustees of his 1930 report in which he had given reasons why it would be unwise to locate the proposed seminary on the college campus. He stated that the reasons given at that time remained valid and that the experiment had not worked well.⁷⁵ He

⁷⁴ McClain, "The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary," 26.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 28.

recommended the seminary be separated from the college, that endowment funds be divided between the schools and that the seminary library be removed from the college.⁷⁶

With Schaffer in attendance the board convened in executive session. Twenty-two board members were present. A report of an investigative committee of the board which had been appointed to look into Ashland affairs at the request of college faculty members was presented.

We your Committee for Investigation, appointed by President Duker, beg leave to report as follows:

Your committee met on May 29 and May 31, 1937, receiving a fair proportion of the members of the arts and seminary faculties, and were greeted with a uniformly fine spirit of co-operation:

Your committee made notes setting forth the viewpoint of each regarding the situation at hand and its solution.

From this investigation and these interviews we have reached the conclusion that the situation cannot be solved by the continuance of the present personnel of the faculties. Therefore we recommend:

That the president of the college be instructed to secure by resignation or dismissal the elimination of Professors Alva J. McClain and Herman Hoyt from the seminary faculty, because of a continued lack of the harmony and co-operation between the arts college and seminary, which are essential to the success of the institution.⁷⁷

After a time of discussion in which each board member was allowed to voice an opinion, a nineteen to three vote in favor of the recommendation was registered. The board members had heard McClain's report calling for a separation of the schools and came to the conclusion that "owing to relatively small resources of the college it would be folly to divide the funds and separate the institution."⁷⁸ A later report of the board members gave their interpretation of the matter.

The two professors declared themselves to be incompatible with the Arts College Faculty, but declared there was no personal ill-will preventing the fellowship of these Brethren; however, they declared it was no longer possible to continue in status quo. One of these professors declared the Board was faced with the responsibility of eliminating either twenty men or two. Since these two men were also in a spirit of rebellion

⁷⁶"Report of the Dean of the Seminary," *The Brethren Evangelist* 59:30 (31 July 1937) 17.

⁷⁷"Report of the Board Investigating Committee," *The Brethren Evangelist* 59:30 (31 July 1937): 17; cf. "Editorial Notes and News," *The Brethren Evangelist* 59:24 (12 June 1937) 4.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*

against the administration and the great majority of the Board, there was no other course except to demand their resignation⁷⁹

Letters dated June 3, 1937, were sent to McClain and Hoyt to inform them officially of the board action.⁸⁰ Heeding the suggestion of L. S. Bauman, the two professors refused to resign so as not to give Ashland the opportunity of saying that the men had left on their own accord. If an explanation were to be necessary, the burden would be upon Ashland.⁸¹ McClain and Hoyt responded in like manner: "Replying to your demand dated June 3, 1937, I decline to submit my resignation, preferring rather, if I must, to leave this institution by your threatened alternative of dismissal."⁸² Letters of dismissal were sent on June 4 along with a copy of the board resolution calling for that action.⁸³

NEW SEMINARY CONCEIVED

Initial Plans

Aware of the board action prior to the official notice, McClain and Hoyt had met at the home of J. C. Beal on the night of June 2. McClain described the momentous occasion.

In his home that night were gathered some of the conservative minority from the college board, members of the foreign missionary board which had been meeting at the same time, a few nearby pastors, and also representative students from both college and seminary. There was not much discussion, but there seemed to be general agreement that some provision should be made for the perpetuation of the ideals and faith of the seminary which had been founded 7 years before, and also to care for the students who were already saying they could never return to the Ashland campus.

Without any human leader, the brethren went to their knees in prayer. When they rose, the late Dr. L. S. Bauman took out his pen, wrote a personal check, and said, "I want to give the first gift to the new school." Someone suggested that a paper be circulated for the

⁷⁹"Trustee Committee Reply to Statement of Cal. 1938," in Ronk, *History of the Brethren Church*, 423.

⁸⁰C. L. Anspach to Alva J. McClain, 3 June 1937, McClain files; C. L. Anspach to Herman A. Hoyt, 3 June 1937, Hoyt files, Morgan Library, Grace Schools, Winona Lake, Indiana.

⁸¹Interview with Herman A. Hoyt, 17 April 1986.

⁸²Alva J. McClain to C. L. Anspach, 3 June 1937, copy, McClain files; cf. Herman A. Hoyt to C. L. Anspach, 3 June 1937, copy, Hoyt files.

⁸³C. L. Anspach to Alva J. McClain, 4 June 1937, McClain files; C. L. Anspach to Herman A. Hoyt, 4 June 1937, Hoyt files.

signatures of all present who desired to work and pray for such a school.⁸⁴

All of the persons in attendance, with the exception of Professor Stuckey who wished first to ascertain his status at the college, signed the commitment. Out of this meeting came the formation of "The Brethren Biblical Seminary Association" which would give birth to Grace Theological Seminary.

Denominational Division

At the annual conference of 1937, Schaffer presented the report of the investigating committee. The delegates heard charges that the Ashland board had adopted a proposal to change the constitution of the college regarding the method of selecting trustees, an action interpreted as wresting control of the college from the church.⁸⁵ They also were confronted with the declaration that responses to a questionnaire sent out by Schaffer to former Ashland College students included testimonies of men losing their desire for further study for the ministry and being encouraged "to enter a more remunerative occupation."⁸⁶ The survey included accusations of theological indifference and antagonism to certain doctrines.

Two professors openly denied the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ. One professor openly ridiculed the Doctrine of the Blood Atonement. One professor upheld the scriptures one day and denied them the next but on the whole was not sympathetic to the Christian ministry and denied many of the Biblical statements dealing with origins. One professor worships at the throne of modernism. Several professors believe in salvation by good works or the "golden rule." One professor denied the New Birth. One professor mocks the Second Coming of our Lord and prophecy in general. One professor doubts life after death and the resurrection body of the believer.⁸⁷

Schaffer was aware of criticism of using student testimony as an accurate representation of the true convictions of the Ashland College professors.

We, however, are aware of the opinion that the most important thing between a teacher and a pupil is the impression the teacher leaves upon

⁸⁴ Alva J. McClain, "The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary," 30.

⁸⁵ "Report of the National Conference Committee on Investigation of Ashland College," 25 August 1937, McClain files.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

that pupil. If the teacher declares he or she has been misrepresented in these statements, how does he account for the fact that all these statements are signed by men and women who either directly or indirectly heard them.⁸⁸

Years later Schaffer continued to stand by his argument that the students reflected the impressions made by the teachers. He did not think it necessary to confront professors personally with the charges and said: "They may deny it."⁸⁹ A questionnaire circulated by supporters of Ashland show results very different from those of Schaffer's research. In the Ashland survey, seminary students were declared to be the cause of problems due to their attitude of superiority, resulting in disharmony and bitterness.⁹⁰

The report of the investigating committee was signed by Schaffer, Stewart, Porte, Wolfe and Wall. Stewart and Porte had second thoughts and did not wish for their signatures to represent agreement with the findings. According to McClain, a motion was made *not* to accept the report and the vote was 263 for the negative motion and 275 against it. However, a two-thirds vote was necessary for acceptance and it was clear that such would not be possible so no further vote was taken.⁹¹ It was evident that there was a definite division in the ranks. A rally was held on one evening during the conference at which approximately five hundred persons interested in a new seminary were in attendance. A denomination which could not afford to support two seminaries was about to find itself in that very situation.

CONCLUSION

Seven years of turmoil over issues such as evolution, Christian life and liberty, soteriology and philosophy of education had served to divide Ashland College and Seminary. In an effort to bring harmony to the campus, the Ashland Board of Trustees took the extreme step of dismissing the seminary dean and his closest associate. Peace came to the Ashland campus while Alva J. McClain and Herman A. Hoyt, in association with other like-minded Brethren leaders, formed a new seminary to carry the banner for their position, a step which resulted in the division of the domination in 1939.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹William H. Schaffer, "History—Grace Seminary," tape presentation, no date, Grace Schools, Winona Lake, Indiana.

⁹⁰"Survey of Student Opinion of Religious Teaching at Ashland College," Ashland, Ohio, no date, McClain files.

⁹¹McClain, "The Background and Origin of Grace Theological Seminary," 31.

RELATIVE CLAUSES IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT: A STATISTICAL STUDY

JAMES L. BOYER

Relative clauses form one of the two main forms of subordinate clauses in NT Greek. Relative clauses may function adjectivally, nominally, or adverbially. A special use of the relative clause is found in alternating clauses connected by μέν and δέ. A relative clause is introduced by a relative pronoun that relates the clause to an antecedent. Generally, the relative agrees with the antecedent in gender and number, but its case is determined by its function in its own clause. Examination of its use in the NT, however, reveals several categories of exceptions to this general rule. The use of moods in relative clauses is governed by the same principles as those in effect for independent clauses. Generally, there is little confusion over the use of relative pronouns and their antecedents. However, there are a few problem passages (e.g., Matt 26:50; 2 Pet 1:4; 3:6; and 1 John 3:20).

* * *

INTRODUCTION

STRUCTURALLY there are two main forms of subordinate clauses in NT Greek: those introduced by relatives and those by conjunctions. The relative clauses are the subject of this article.¹

A relative clause is introduced by a relative word, either a relative pronoun or adjective or adverb. The statement made by the

¹Statistical information used in the preparation of this article was generated using GRAMCORD, a computer-based grammatical concordance of the Greek NT (see my article, "Project Gramcord: A Report," *GTJ* 1 [1980] 97–99). The present article is part of the following series of my articles based on GRAMCORD published in *GTJ*: "First Class Conditions: What Do They Mean?" *GTJ* 2 (1981) 75–114; "Second Class Conditions in New Testament Greek," *GTJ* 3 (1982) 81–88; "Third (and Fourth) Class Conditions," *GTJ* 3 (1982) 163–75; "Other Conditional Elements in New Testament Greek," *GTJ* 4 (1983) 173–88; "The Classification of Participles: A Statistical Study," *GTJ* 5 (1984) 163–79; "The Classification of Infinitives: A Statistical Study," *GTJ* 6

relative clause might stand alone as an independent sentence, but the speaker chooses to “relate” it subordinately to some noun or other substantival expression in the main clause by using a special relative word for that purpose. The element to which it is related is called the antecedent.

The relative pronouns that will be under consideration in this study are the regular relative, ὅς, ᾧ, ὁ, the indefinite relative ὅστις, ἥτις, ὃ τι, the correlatives ὅσος, οἷος, ὅποῖος, and ἥλικος. The last four sometimes also function adjectivally and the last only as an adjective. Clauses introduced by relative adverbs could also be included in a study of relative clauses, but they are sufficiently distinctive to merit separate consideration as adverbial clauses.² However, those clauses introduced by an adverbial phrase that incorporates the relative pronoun (such as ἀνθ' ὃν or ἔως οὗ) will be included here since they involve a relative pronoun directly.³

CLASSIFICATION OF RELATIVE CLAUSES

Clauses may be analyzed on the bases of structure (main, coordinate, or subordinate), grammatical function (nominal, adjectival, or adverbial), and semantical function. Relative clauses are subordinate and may function in any of the grammatical categories listed. Semantically, relative clauses may be classified as temporal, conditional, causal, modal (manner), purpose, or result.

Adjectival Relative Clauses

The primary, basic significance of the relative clause is adjectival. In a sense all relative clauses are adjectival. Like the substantive use of an adjective, a relative clause by the omission of the antecedent can become a substantive or noun clause. And by association with various words and with prepositions the adjective may become adverbial. But

(1985) 29–48; “The Classification of Subjunctives: A Statistical Study,” *GTJ* 7 (1986) 3–19; “A Classification of Imperatives: A Statistical Study,” *GTJ* 8 (1987) 35–54; and “The Classification of Optative: A Statistical Study,” *GTJ* 9 (1988) 129–40. Informational materials and listings generated in the preparation of this article may be found in my “Supplemental Manual of Information: Relative Clauses” (available through interlibrary loan from the Morgan Library, Grace Theological Seminary, 200 Seminary Drive, Winona Lake, IN 46590). Information about GRAMCORD is available through my co-developer Paul R. Miller, Project GRAMCORD, 18897 Deerpath Road, Wildwood, IL 60030.

²I plan to undertake a statistical study of adverbial clauses in the future.

³There is one use of the relative pronoun that does not always involve a clause, and thus does not fall strictly within the scope indicated by the title of this paper. However, since it usually does so, it will be included. See “The Alternating Use of the Relative,” below.

the true adjectival use is by far the most frequent (1079 [64%] out of 1680).

Adjectival relative clauses may be descriptive or restrictive (identifying), just as other adjectives. Adjectival clauses are descriptive when they ascribe a quality or attribute to the antecedent, and restrictive when they define or identify the antecedent. The two categories are not mutually exclusive, and they may overlap, requiring subjective judgment on the part of the interpreter. For example, ἐξ ἣς ἦγεννήθη Ἰησοῦς = ‘from whom Jesus was born’ (Matt 1:16) could be describing Mary as Jesus’ mother, or it could be distinguishing her from others of the same name (i.e., the Mary who bore Jesus). The context seems to suggest the descriptive sense. But in spite of the subjectivity, the distinction is real and useful. In Matt 2:6 the sense is clearly descriptive (“a Ruler, who will shepherd My people Israel”).⁴ In Matt 2:9 the relative clause is clearly restrictive (“the star, which they had seen in the East”). There are, based on my judgment, 225 descriptive and 432 restrictive relative clauses in the NT.⁵

Another category needs to be recognized which goes beyond the functions of regular adjectives. Blass, in his treatment of sentence structure, speaks of two types of Greek prose; the periodic style, characterized by artistically developed prose, and the running or continuous style, characterized by plain and unsophisticated language. The running style is found in two patterns. One pattern has a series of separate sentences, usually connected by καί. The other pattern extends the first statement by means of participial phrases, clauses introduced by ὅτι, or relative clauses. Blass defines this ‘Relative Connective’ as “a loosening of the connection of the relative clause to the preceding complex sentence; something intermediate between a relative clause and a demonstrative clause: ὅς = and this, but this, this very thing.”⁶

The relative connective use of the relative clause becomes quite obvious when modern speech English versions of the NT are compared with older translations that follow the grammar of the Greek. Long sentences are broken down into many shorter ones in conformity to modern style. In many instances the break occurs where the Greek has a relative. For example, Paul’s “long sentence,” Eph 1:4–14, is divided by the *KJV* into three sentences; the last two sentences open with a relative clause. The *NASB* and the *NIV* break it into six sentences; after the first sentence all but two breaks come at

⁴ Translations will be given from the *NASB* unless otherwise stated.

⁵ Lists of these and many other helpful details which cannot be included in this article are available in the supplementary manual listed in n. 1.

⁶BDF, 239.

a relative. Even the Nestle²⁶ Greek text divides the passage into four sentences; after the opening one each begins with a relative.

Another indication that the Greek relative serves as a connective is seen in an examination of the ways in which the *NASB*, which follows the Greek syntax more closely than other modern versions, translates the relative in the NT. In approximately 10% of all occurrences (160 out of 1680) it translates the relative by using a personal or demonstrative pronoun, even on occasion inserting a noun, thus removing the "relation" supplied by the relative.

Such relative connectives are still adjectival and could probably be classified as either descriptive or restrictive, but the consideration that has prompted their separate treatment is the fact that they move the thought of the sentence into a new area. By my count, there are 422 relative connectives in the NT.

Nominal Relative Clauses

There are 473 relative clauses in the NT for which the antecedent of the relative pronoun is lacking, left to be supplied, or understood. The relative pronoun is usually translated by "the one who," "that which," or "what" (= "that which," not the interrogative). Actually, it is better to consider the relative as containing in itself its antecedent, and the entire clause becomes in effect a substantive.⁷ The clause itself becomes the subject or object of the sentence, or fills some other function in the sentence.

When a nominal relative clause comes at the beginning or early in a sentence, it sometimes happens that a redundant personal or demonstrative pronoun is used later in the sentence. The redundant pronoun is called a pleonastic pronoun. This construction was found in Classical Greek, but it is much more common in biblical Greek, due probably to the influence of a similar Semitic idiom.

A nominal relative clause may be categorized according to its function in a sentence. The two most common functions are subject or direct object of a verb, but other noun functions are found as well.

Subject of the Verb

Of the nominal relative clauses, 139 (29%) serve as subject of a sentence. Examples are Luke 7:4; ὁ ξιός ἐστιν ὃ παρέξῃ τοῦτο, "the

⁷Grammarians describe this situation differently. For example, BAGD (p. 583) says, "A demonstrative pron. is freq. concealed within the relative pron." But W. W. Goodwin (*Greek Grammar*, rev. C. B. Gulick [Boston: Ginn, 1930] 219) says, "In such cases it is a mistake to say that ταῦτα, ἐκεῖνοι, etc. are *understood*. . . . The relative clause here really becomes a substantive, and contains its antecedent within itself."

one to whom you should grant this is worthy" (my translation; the *NASB* alters the sentence structure, "He is worthy for you to grant this to him") and John 1:33: ἐφ' ὃν ἔδης τὸ πνεῦμα καταβαῖνον καὶ μένον ἦν' αὐτόν, οὗτος ἐστιν ὁ βαπτίζων, "He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one who baptizes." The last example illustrates also the pleonastic pronoun, οὗτος, which repeats the subject. Eleven subject clauses use a pleonastic pronoun.

Direct Object of the Verb

The largest number of the nominal relative clauses, 222 (47%), function as direct object of the verb; in 31 instances a pleonastic pronoun is also used. Mark 1:44 illustrates this object clause: προσένεγκε περὶ τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ σου ἀ προσέταξεν Μωϋσῆς, "offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded." In Rom 7:15, 16 this construction occurs four times, three of them with the pleonastic pronoun (e.g., ἀλλ' ὁ μισῶ τοῦτο ποιῶ, "the thing I hate, this I do" [my translation]).

Other Nominative

Other than as subject, the nominal relative clause is found in a nominative case relationship most frequently as a predicative nominative in a copulative sentence (19 times). An example is found in John 1:30: οὗτος ἐστιν ὁ πέρι οὗ ἐγὼ εἶπον, "This is He on behalf of whom I said." In four instances there may be a nominative absolute construction (Matt 10:14; 23:16, 18; and 1 Tim 3:16).

Other Accusative

Other than as direct object, the nominal relative clause is in an accusative relationship 17 times: as object of a preposition (10 times); as the complement of a direct objective (twice); and once each as accusative of person, of thing, and of respect; in apposition to a direct object; and subject of an infinitive. For example, in 2 Cor 12:20 μή πως ἔλθων οὐκ οἶους θέλω εὑρώ ὑμᾶς κάγῳ εὑρεθῶ ὑμῖν οἶον οὐ θέλετε, "afraid that . . . I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish," the clause οὐχ οἶους θέλω is the complement to the direct object ὑμᾶς. In the latter part of the sentence the same construction is somewhat obscured by the verb changing to passive. Col 3:6 is an example of a nominal relative clause as accusative object of a preposition: δι' ἀ ἔρχεται ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ, "on account of which things the wrath of God comes" (my translation).

Genitive Substantive

The nominal relative clause occurs in a genitive relation to the sentence 31 times: as genitive object of a preposition (17 times), as a partitive genitive (6 times), as an epexegetic genitive (4 times), as a genitive of comparison (twice), as a genitive of relationship (once), and as a genitive of content (once). An example of a partitive genitive is found in Rom 15:18: οὐ γὰρ τολμήσω τι λαλεῖν ὃν οὐ κατειργάσατο Χριστὸς δι’ ἐμοῦ, “For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me.” A genitive of comparison is found in John 7:31: ὁ Χριστὸς ὅταν ἔλθῃ μὴ πλείονα σημεῖα ποιήσει ὃν οὗτος ἐποίησεν; “When the Christ will come, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?”

Dative Substantive

The nominal relative clause is dative 41 times (13 with a pleonastic pronoun): as indirect object (19 times), as object of a preposition (15 times), as dative of possession (5 times), and once each as dative of respect and of instrument. An example of an indirect object is found in Gal 3:19: τὸ σπέρμα ὃ ἐπήγγελται, “the seed . . . to whom the promise had been made.” A dative of possession is found in Mark 11:23: ὃς ἂν εἴπῃ τῷ ὄφει τούτῳ . . . ἔσται αὐτῷ, “whoever says to this mountain . . . it shall be granted him [literally ‘it shall be to him’, or, ‘it shall be his’].” Here the pleonastic pronoun *αὐτῷ* helps to identify the case and the construction.

Adverbial Clauses

Ninety times in the NT the relative, together with a preposition or some specific word expressing an adverbial idea, or both, becomes an introductory phrase for a clause functioning adverbially. The adverbial sense does not derive from the relative but from the preposition and the antecedent of the relative. Fuller treatment of adverbial clauses (including those introduced by a relative) is planned for a future study, but a brief discussion is included here for the sake of completeness.

Temporal Clauses

Of the approximately 420 subordinate temporal clauses in the NT, 57 are introduced by a relative phrase. The temporal sense is indicated by the antecedent of the relative, sometimes expressed but more commonly omitted. When it is not stated it can be determined reasonably by the gender of the relative and the analogy of instances where it is used. The antecedent most frequently is *χρόνος* in its proper case form (47 times, 5 of them actually expressed), then *ἡμέρα*

(9 times, 7 expressed), and ὥρα (once only, understood from the context). The simple relative ὃς is used in 36 instances, ὅστις is seen 5 times in the phrase ἔως ὅτου, and the correlative ὅσος 6 times.

The actual phrases and the number of occurrences in the NT are listed here. Brackets indicate that the antecedent is left to be understood:

ἀφ' ἡς ἡμέρας	3
ἀφ' ἡς [ἡμέρας	2
ἀφ' ἡς [ὥρας	1
ἀφ' οὐ [χρόνου	4
ἐν ᾧ [χρόνῳ	4
ἐφ' ὅσον χρόνον	2
ἐφ' ὅσον [χρόνον	1
ὅσον χρόνον	3
ἄχρι ἡς ἡμέρας	4
ἄχρι οὐ [χρόνου	4
ἄχρις οὖ [χρόνου	5
μέχρι οὖ [χρόνου	2
ἔως οὖ [χρόνου	17
ἔως ὅτου [χρόνου	5

Causal Clauses

There are 16 clauses classified as causal clauses introduced by relative phrases. The causal sense is indicated by the prepositions used, by the antecedent, or by both. The phrases and number of occurrences are:

δι' ἦν αἰτίαν	5
δι' ἦν	1
ἦν αἰτίαν	1
ἀνθ' ὥν	5
ἐφ' ᾧ	2
εἴνεκεν οὖ	1
οὖ χάριν	1

Διά with accusative, εἴνεκεν and χάριν all mean ‘on account of’, or ‘because of’. Ανθ’ ὥν ‘in exchange for these things’ may be understood as “because of these things.” Εφ’ ᾧ may be contracted from ἐφ’ ᾧ τούτῳ ὅτι ‘for this reason that’ or ‘because’.⁸ Six times the causal sense is shown by αἰτία as the antecedent, one time without a preposition. Once (2 Pet 3:12), δι’ ἦν clearly has ἡμέρας as its antecedent, not αἰτία, yet the sense is causal rather than temporal, as διά

⁸Cf. BAGD, 287.

with the accusative requires. Nine times the relative is neuter with no antecedent, pointing to the general context for the reason or cause.⁹

Clauses Expressing Degree or Measure

Ten adverbial relative clauses express degree or measure, in each case introduced by the correlative ὅσος, a word involving the idea of quantity or measure. The adverbial clause answers the questions, how much? or to what degree?

In three of these clauses the relative has an adverb as its antecedent ($\mu\ddot{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\omegaν$ in Mark 7:36, and $\mu\kappa\rho\acute{v}$ (twice) in Heb 10:37). Actually the last two do not involve a clause at all, functioning as simple adverbs. These are unusual constructions, but not improper.

Clauses Expressing Manner

The phrases $\delta v\tau\rho\acute{o}pov$ (5 times) and $\kappa\theta'\delta v\tau\rho\acute{o}pov$ (twice) both mean “according to the manner which.” These phrases clearly introduce a clause of manner.

Other Adverbial Clauses?

Mention should be made here of certain relative clauses, called by some grammarians “conditional relative clauses” and “relative purpose clauses” (and a few others which, if valid, should be included here but are not). I have previously discussed “conditional relative clauses,” and concluded that, while the clauses may contain a suggestion of condition, they are not, and should not be, classified as conditional sentences.¹⁰

The situation is much the same with the so-called “relative purpose clause,” or other clauses that may suggest other adverbial senses. As A. T. Robertson says,

Almost any sentence is capable of being changed into some other form as a practical equivalent. The relative clause may indeed have a resultant effect of cause, condition, purpose or result, but in itself it expresses none of these things. It is like the participle in this respect. One must not read into it more than is there . . .¹¹ As in Latin, the relative clause may imply cause, purpose, result, concession or condition, though the sentence itself does not say this much. This is due to the logical relation in the sentence. The sense glides from mere explanation to ground or

⁹Some see a similar causal or instrumental sense in some of the occurrences of $\dot{\epsilon}v\phi$ (Rom 8:3; 14:21; Heb 2:18; 6:17). Cf. BAGD, 261.

¹⁰See my article, “Other Conditional Elements in New Testament Greek,” 185–86.

¹¹A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934) 956.

reason. . . .¹² The indefinite relative like ὅς ἐὰν θέλῃ (Mk. 8:35) or ὅστις ὁμολογήσει (Mt. 10:32) is quite similar in idea to a conditional clause with ἐὰν τις or εἴ τις. But, after all, it is not a conditional sentence any more than the so-called causal, final, consecutive relative clauses are really so. It is only by the context that anyone inferentially gets any of these ideas out of the relative.¹³

Alternating Use of Relative with Μέν, Δέ

The relative pronoun is used with the particles μέν and δέ to express alternatives, such as are expressed in English by “the one . . . the other” or “some . . . others.” This is about the only remainder in NT Greek of an original demonstrative sense of the relative pronoun.¹⁴ The article also (ὁ μέν . . . ὁ δέ) is used in this alternating construction, reflecting the same historical origin as a demonstrative. Certain other words, ἄλλος (24 times), ἔτερος (10 times), and the indefinite τινές (5 times), are also so used. Often these different patterns are mixed together in one set of such alternative expressions. Even ἄλλος and ἔτερος mingle in the same set in a way that seems to defy explanation (cf. 1 Cor 12:8–10). The number of occurrences in the NT for these alternating expressions are as follows:

Relatives only (ὅς μέν . . . ὅς δέ)	13
Article only (ὁ μέν . . . ὁ δέ)	10
Other words only	9
Relative combined with article	2
Relative combined with other words	5
Article combined with other words	7
Total sets of alternatives	46
Total number of relatives involved	38

The sets may consist of two alternatives (26 times), of three (11 times), of four (6 times), and one set of nine alternatives.

The first item in the list is not always marked by μέν (9 exceptions). Instead, the numeral εἷς, the indefinite pronoun τινές, the demonstrative article of δέ, even a noun (Heb 11:35) and a partitive genitive phrase (John 7:40), all without μέν, may constitute the first item. The alternate items of each list are almost invariably marked by δέ; the only exceptions are in the parallel passages, Mark 4:5 and Luke 8:6, where καὶ ἄλλα or καὶ ἔτερον is found, respectively. 1 Cor 12:28, with οὐς μέν but no succeeding δέ, does not fit the “some . . .

¹²Ibid., 960.

¹³Ibid., 961–62.

¹⁴Ibid., 695–96.

other" pattern; the numbered items following the first are not alternatives to, but descriptions of, the first. Thus it is not classified in this group.

THE MECHANICS OF RELATIVE CLAUSES

In this section the various relative pronouns will be discussed. This will be followed by a discussion of the antecedents. Finally, the matter of agreement between relative pronouns and their antecedents will be analyzed.

The Relative Pronoun

By far the most frequently used relative pronoun is ὃς, ᾳ, ὅ (1395 times, or 83% of the total). It is found in almost every gender, number, and case, and in every functional classification except one, where the sense calls for the quantitative ὅσος.

"Οστις, ἥτις, ὁ τι is second in frequency (153 or 9%). This word is a compound of the common relative ὃς and the indefinite pronoun τις, with both parts of the compound experiencing inflection. This compounding with the indefinite and the use of the word in the early Greek gave it the name Indefinite Relative. But the name is no longer appropriate in the Greek of the NT. Blass says that ὃς and ὅστις "are no longer clearly distinguished in the NT."¹⁵ W. F. Howard¹⁶ shows that ὅστις occurs almost solely in the nominative case and in the accusative neuter, the only exception being an old genitive singular neuter form surviving in the stereotyped phrase ἔως ὅτου. N. Turner says,

Already in the Koine the distinction between the relative pronoun of individual and definite reference (ὅς and ὅσος) and that of general and indeterminate reference (ὅστις and ὅπόσος) has become almost completely blurred. Indeed in general relative clauses ὃς is the rule, and although ὅστις is still used occasionally in its proper sense of *whoever*, it is nearly always misused, by Attic standards, of a definite and particular person.¹⁷

Cadbury¹⁸ makes the difference almost a matter of inflection, asserting that in Luke the normal inflection is ὃς, ἥτις, ὁ (nominative singular) and οἵτινες, αἵτινες, ἄ (nominative plural).

¹⁵BDF, 152.

¹⁶W. F. Howard, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. 2, *Accidence and Word Formation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920) 179.

¹⁷N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. 3, *Syntax* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963) 47.

¹⁸H. J. Cadbury, "The Relative Pronouns in Acts and Elsewhere," *JBL* 42 (1923) 150–57. He claims only four exceptions in about 200 occurrences.

"Οσος is a correlative pronoun which adds the concept of quantity to the relative concept and can be translated "as much as," "how much," or "as great as." It is used of space and time, of quantity and number, or of measure and degree. With πάντες it means "all who." With the correlative demonstrative τοσοῦτος it describes one item by comparing it with another quantitatively. It occurs 110 times in the NT (about 6.5% of the relatives) and in every major classification of relative uses.

Οἷος is much like οσος but is qualitative rather than quantitative. It is usually translated "of what sort" or "such as." It is used in simple relative clauses and in indirect questions and exclamations. Only 14 instances occur (less than 1%).

Οποῖος, like οἷος, is qualitative, "of what sort." It is used, much as οἷος, in simple relative clauses and in indirect questions. There are only 5 occurrences (less than 0.3%). Οπόσος ("how great," "how much"), which relates to οσος in the same way that οποῖος does to οἷος, does not occur at all in the NT.

Ηλίκος, "how large," "how small," occurs only three times in the NT, always of size or stature (its cognate noun ἡλικία is used both of age and stature). The pronoun is used only in indirect questions.

The Antecedent

Definitions

A pronoun is a standardized, abbreviated substitute for a noun. Every pronoun has an antecedent, the nominal in place of which the pronoun stands. A relative pronoun introduces a subordinate relative clause that makes an assertion about the pronoun's antecedent. In Luke 2:10 the angel said "I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all people." By dropping the relative "which" and repeating the antecedent "joy" the statement may be restated as two sentences: "I bring you good news of a great joy. That great joy shall be for all people." Thus the relative is the subordinating link and the antecedent is the point of linkage in putting together two clauses.

Grammatical Form of Antecedent

The antecedent of a relative pronoun may be a simple noun or a substantival expression. By approximate count, 900 antecedents of relative pronouns are nouns, 150 are pronouns, 160 are other substantival expressions, 100 are the subject expressed in the person and number of the verb, and 340 antecedents are left to be understood from the context. Very unusual are three whose antecedent is an

adverb (see above under the heading, Clauses Expressing Degree or Measure).

The large number of noun antecedents needs no comment. The pronouns are mostly personal or demonstrative. The pleonastic pronoun antecedent will be discussed below. Also, the antecedent found in the inflection of the verb is self-explanatory. Of the other substantival expressions, a pronominal adjective is found most often as the antecedent of a relative pronoun (forms of *πᾶς* [50+ times]; its opposite *οὐδείς* [13 times]; specific numbers like *εἷς* or *δώδεκα* [10 times]; and indefinite numbers like *πολύς*, *ἄλλος*, *ἕτερος*, and *λοιπός* [17 times]). Other substantival adjectives account for about 25 antecedents. Substantival participles are antecedents in 38 instances. In three places (Acts 2:39, 2 Tim 1:15, Heb 12:25–26) the antecedent is an attributive prepositional phrase. A quoted scriptural passage that functions as a noun clause is used as the antecedent of a relative pronoun in Eph 6:2. Even an infinitive serves as an antecedent in Phil 4:10.

In many places the relative has no specific antecedent stated in the sentence (about 340 times). In some of these cases it is possible to supply from the context a word which may be given as an understood antecedent. But in most of these cases the antecedent is rather to be seen as implicit in the relative itself. Often the clue is in the gender of the relative. Masculine and feminine may mean “the one who.” Neuter may mean “the thing which,” “that which,” or “what.” The neuter relative may also be used to refer generally to the idea or sense of the context. This implicit or “understood”¹⁹ antecedent is especially common when a relative clause itself functions as a noun clause, and the antecedent implicit in the relative explains why a following pronoun is called pleonastic or redundant.

Location of Antecedent

The very term antecedent suggests that the antecedent comes before the relative, as it actually does in 1089 cases (about 82%). But in 244 cases the antecedent follows the relative in the sentence. If one subtracts the 69 places where the pleonastic pronoun is counted as an antecedent following the relative, there are 175 cases (less than 13%) in which the antecedent follows the relative.

How far before or after the relative the antecedent may be found is not easy to summarize even with all the statistics at hand. Counting inclusively (that is, a count of two means it is the next word) a few observations may be helpful. Full statistics are available.

¹⁹See n. 7.

Antecedent before relative:

Next word before	39%
5 words or less before	25%
10 to 20 words before	10%
over 20 words before	3%

Antecedent after relative:

Next word after	25%
5 words or less after	71%
10 to 20 words after	31%
over 20 words after	4%

*Agreement*²⁰

Since a relative has connections with both the antecedent and the relative clause, its grammatical identifiers (gender, number, and case) do double duty. Normally, gender and number agree with the antecedent, but the case of the relative is determined by its grammatical function in its own clause. This normal rule is true in the NT more than 96% of the time. The exceptions to this rule are often called by grammarians “ad sensum” agreement, i.e., agreement in sense but not in grammatical form. The exceptions may be listed in five categories.

Natural or Real Versus Grammatical Gender and Number

There are 25 examples in the NT that may be classified in this category. Words like ἔθνος, τέκνον, and πλῆθος are grammatically neuter, but since they refer to people, sometimes masculine relatives are used with them. Words like καρπός, σπόρος are grammatically masculine, but they really are things, so neuter relatives may be used with them. Θηρίον is neuter, but when it is used of the human “beast” of the Revelation, a masculine relative is used. Κεφαλή is feminine, but when it is used as a figure for Christ as head of the church, a masculine relative is used. This real versus grammatical distinction sometimes effects agreement in number also. Οὐρανός, whether singular or plural in grammatical form, may mean simply “heaven,” and once (Phil 3:20) the plural form is antecedent to a singular relative. Similarly, ὄδωρ in the singular is found once as the antecedent of a plural relative (2 Pet 3:6). Ναός is singular, but when it is used collectively for the people of God (1 Cor 3:17), it is referred to by οἵτινες, a plural relative. In Luke 6:17–18 πλῆθος, a neuter

²⁰ For the rest of this section on the mechanics of relative clauses, I have depended largely on the thorough work of A. T. Robertson (*Grammar*, 714–22). Very helpful also is the discussion of ὅσ in BAGD, 583–85.

singular antecedent, is found with the masculine plural οῖ as relative, illustrating natural or real agreement in both gender and number.

Translation Formulas

A rather distinct group (7 instances) of these “ad sensum” agreements involve a formula for the translation of names of persons, places, titles, etc., from one language to another. The formula appears in six closely related forms, all of which begin with the neuter relative pronoun, ὃ. The specific phrases and their number of occurrences in the NT are as follows:

ὅ ἐστιν	6 ²¹
ὅ ἐστιν μεθερμηνευόμενον	5 ²²
ὅ ἐστιν λεγόμενος	1 ²³
ὅ λέγεται	2 ²⁴
ὅ λέγεται μεθερμηνευόμενον	1 ²⁵
ὅ ἐρμηνεύεται	2 ²⁶

The antecedent usually is a word that has no grammatical gender in Greek, and the neuter relative is a natural one if we understand it to refer to the “word” itself rather than that which it designates, mentally supplying ρῆμα or ὅνομα.

Agreement with Predicate Substantives²⁷

Some of the exceptions to the rule of agreement show an agreement of a different kind; the relative clause is a copulative one with a predicate substantive, and the relative agrees in gender with the predicate substantive rather than with the antecedent in the main clause. An example is found in Eph 6:17: τὴν μάχαιραν τοῦ πνεύματος, ὅ ἐστιν ρῆμα θεοῦ, “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” The actual antecedent is μάχαιραν (feminine), but the predicate substantive, which is of course referring to the same thing, is ρῆμα (neuter), and the relative neuter agrees with it. In every instance the predicate substantive is more prominent than the actual antecedent.

²¹Mark 7:11, 34; 12:42; 15:16, 42; Heb 7:2.

²²Mark 5:41; 15:22, 34; John 1:41; Acts 4:36.

²³Matt 27:33.

²⁴John 19:17; 20:16.

²⁵John 1:38.

²⁶John 1:42; 9:7.

²⁷Nine instances: Mark 7:11; 15:16, 42; Gal 3:16; Eph 6:17; 2 Thess 3:17; 1 Tim 3:15; Rev 4:5; 5:8.

Neuter of General Notion²⁸

Sometimes the antecedent seems to be not some specific word but the general notion, the concept. Col 3:14 has an example: ἐπὶ πᾶσιν δὲ τούτοις τὴν ἀγάπην, ὅ ἐστιν σύνδεσμος τῆς τελειότητος, “And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.” The antecedent is ἀγάπην (feminine), but the sense suggested by the neuter relative seems to be “that thing, quality, which is the uniting bond.”

Neuter of Abstraction

In the NT as also classical Greek, and especially in John’s writings, the neuter is frequently used of a person when he is being thought of in an abstract way. This happens at least 6 times²⁹ in which a neuter relative is used to refer to an antecedent who is obviously a person. An example is found in John 17:24: Πάτερ, ὁ δέδωκάς μοι, θέλω ἵνα ὅπου ἔιμι ἐγὼ κάκεινοι ὥσιν μετ’ ἐμοῦ, “Father, I desire that they also whom [the neuter, ὅ] Thou has given Me be with Me where I am.” The antecedent is obviously not impersonal. This abstract neuter is used elsewhere of God (John 4:22) and of men (John 6:37, 39; 17:2; 1 John 5:4).

1 John 1:1–3 has a list of five relative clauses serving as object of a verb in v 3. The relatives are all ὅ (neuter) and the antecedent is not stated. Two interpretations are conceivable: one is impersonal (“we proclaim to you the message which”), the other is personal (“we proclaim to you the One who”). The obvious parallel to the prologue of the gospel of John strongly indicates the personal view, and the use of the expression ὁ . . . αἱ χεῖρες ἡμῶν ἐψηλάφησαν, “which our hands handled” (my translation) requires the personal view—one cannot feel a message with his hands. What should be noted particularly here is that the neuter does not require the impersonal interpretation. It may refer in an abstract way to “all He was and did, abstract Deity.”

Some General Considerations

First, it should be noted that above exceptions to the rule of agreement are not mutually exclusive; some instances fit into two

²⁸Seven instances: Matt 12:4; Gal 2:20; Eph 5:4, 5; Col 3:14; 2 Thess 3:17; 1 Tim 2:10.

²⁹John 17:24; 1 John 1:1–3 (5 times). There are other places where the neuter relative has a grammatically neuter antecedent (*πᾶν*), so that the gender mismatch is obscured: John 6:37, 39; 17:2.

of the categories. For example, three relatives listed as translation of foreign words also show agreement with the predicate substantive.

Second, a large number of these “ad sensum” agreements involve the neuter gender (about three-fourths of the total), and a large number involve the specific phrase ὃ ἐστιν. That raises the possibility that the phrase has become a stereotyped expression in which the gender is “neutral” rather than neuter, like the Latin *id est*, “that is,” used in English and written in abbreviation, “i.e.” A careful study shows that ὃ ἐστιν often seems to act like that, but there are other times when it preserves normal agreement in all three genders, so such a conclusion cannot be certain. Another phrase, τοῦτ’ ἐστιν, “that is,” is totally neutral in gender and equals the use of “i.e.”

Third, “ad sensum” agreement is not peculiar to Greek. It is a very natural construction which usually causes no problem of interpretation.

Attraction³⁰

Attraction involves the case of the relative and antecedent. The normal rule is that case is determined by the grammatical function of the relative within its own clause. But there are exceptions to the general rule in which the relative is attracted to the case of the antecedent.

The situations that produce the exceptions to the general rule involve a relative whose case is attracted to the case of the antecedent (a phenomenon also found in classical Greek, particularly if the relative clause was separated from the antecedent by other modifiers). Most often (50 times in the NT), the attraction involves a relative whose grammatical function in its clause calls for an accusative, but the antecedent is either dative or genitive; in such circumstances, the relative is generally attracted to the case of the antecedent. In addition, there are 10 instances in the NT where the grammatical function of a relative calls for the dative case, but the case is attracted to the case of a genitive antecedent. Cases of non-attraction are rare in the NT (Heb 8:2 and a few variant readings for other passages).

Inverse Attraction

Sometimes the reverse of what I have described as attraction occurs; the antecedent is attracted to the case of the relative. An example is found in Matt 21:42: λίθον ὃν ἀπεδοκίμασαν of οἴκο-

³⁰ Grammarians do not agree on the terminology here. Goodwin (*Grammar*, 220–21) uses the word “assimilation” for what most grammarians call “attraction,” and “attraction” for what others call “incorporation.”

δομοῦντες, οὗτος ἐγενήθη εἰς κεφαλὴν γωνίας, “The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief cornerstone” (cf. Mark 12:10 and Luke 20:17). The “stone” is the subject of the verb ἐγενήθη and as such would be nominative, but it is attracted to the case of the relative ὃν which is accusative as direct object of its clause. Note also the pleonastic οὗτος. Also note that in 1 Pet 2:7 the same quotation is given without this inverse attraction; λίθος is nominative. In 1 Cor 10:16 inverse attraction occurs twice, both ποτήριον and ἄρτον are subjects of their clauses but are attracted to the accusative case of the relatives. Luke 12:10 shows inverse attraction from dative to nominative case. Inverse attraction in the NT involves the use of an accusative for a nominative (7 times), an accusative for a genitive (4 times), an accusative for a dative (once), a nominative for a dative (once), a dative for an accusative (once), and a dative for a genitive (once).

Inverse attraction usually happens when the relative clause precedes the main clause, but the antecedent is pulled forward (for emphasis) to a position just before the relative. In some instances anacoluthon may be involved; the case of the antecedent results from a grammatical construction which is begun, but not completed.³¹

Incorporation

Frequently (42 times) the antecedent is moved out of its position in the main clause and incorporated into the relative clause. When this happens, the antecedent does not have an article, it usually does not follow immediately after the relative (except in a few set phrases: ὃν τρόπον, η̄ ἡμέρᾳ, η̄ ὥρᾳ, δι’ ἣν αἰτίᾳ), and it is in the same case as the relative, either by attraction or because both have the same natural case. Examples are found in Mark 6:16, ὃν ἐγὼ ἀποκεφάλισα Ἰωάννην, οὗτος ἤγέρθη, “John, whom I beheaded, he has risen” and Luke 19:37, περὶ πασῶν ὧν εἶδον δυνάμεων, “for all the miracles which they had seen.”

With Prepositions

When either or both the antecedent and the relative stand in a prepositional phrase, a variety of forms may result. The preposition may appear with both (e.g., Acts 20:18: ἀπὸ πρώτης ἡμέρας ἀφ’ ἣς), with the relative only (e.g., John 4:53: ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ ἐν ᾧ), or with the antecedent only (e.g., Acts 1:21: ἐν παντὶ χρόνῳ ὃ εἰσῆλθεν). If the antecedent is unexpressed, the preposition may be the one common to both (e.g., 2 Cor 2:3: ἀφ’ ὃν), the one which belongs to the relative (e.g., Luke 17:1: δι’ οὐ = τούτῳ δι’ οὐ), or the one which

³¹Cf. Robertson, *Grammar*, 718.

would have been used with the antecedent (e.g., John 17:9: περὶ ὃν = περὶ τούτων οὓς).

MOODS USED IN RELATIVE CLAUSES

The relative has no affect whatever on the mood. The mood in relative clauses is governed by the same principles as it would be in an independent clause, and conveys the same semantic significance.

Indicative

The indicative is the most common mood used in relative clauses (1436 [84%] out of 1680). All the tenses are represented.

Subjunctive

The subjunctive also is used frequently (159 times [9%]). Only present subjunctives (38 times) and aorist subjunctives (121 times) are found in relative clauses in the NT.

The basic significance of the subjunctive mood is potentiality or indefiniteness, both involving futurity. This element is always present in relative clauses which use a subjunctive verb.

Oὐ Μή with the Subjunctive

Elsewhere³² this use of the subjunctive in emphatic future assertions has been discussed. It is usually found in main clauses but may be used anywhere an indicative can be used. The strangeness of the use of the subjunctive for emphatic assertion may be explained by the significance of the two negatives. The μή immediately preceding the subjunctive verb negates the verb, making the clause a doubtful assertion. The οὐ before the μή negates the doubtfulness, making the total expression mean “not doubtful,” “no doubt about it.” Thus, the subjunctive is a “positively negated” future potentiality. It is found in 8 relative clauses in the NT, involving 9 subjunctive verbs.³³

Indefinite Relative Clauses

These are the clauses which in English add the suffix “ever” to the relative introducing the clause (“whoever” or “whatever,” referring to an indefinite or general antecedent). Most (61%) are nominal clauses, serving as the subject or object of the main verb or some other substantival function. About one-fourth are adjectival. Typically they are introduced by a relative with ᾳν or ἐάν (124); the relative is

³²Cf. my article, “Subjunctives,” 6.

³³Matt 16:28; Mark 9:1; 13:2; Luke 8:17; 9:27; 18:30; Acts 13:41; Rom 4:8.

ὅς (101 times), ὅσος (12 times), or ὅστις (11 times). Once the indefinite relative ὅστις is used without ἦν (James 2:10), and once the simple relative is used with the indefinite pronoun τι as its antecedent (Heb 8:3). One indefinite relative clause is so compressed that it is difficult to analyze (Acts 21:16). All of the indefinite relative clauses use the subjunctive mood.

Relative Adverbial Clauses of Time

This group of relative clauses has been discussed above and needs here only to be looked at with respect to the mood used. All of the other adverbial relative clauses and more than two-thirds of the relative temporal clauses use the indicative mood. But about one-third of the relative temporal clauses use the subjunctive. Relative temporal clauses follow the standard procedure for all temporal clauses. When the sense is “until” and the time “until which” is either future or unknown, then the subjunctive is used. In all other instances the indicative is used. So the subjunctive here is normal usage and fits the basic significance of the mood.

Hortatory Subjunctive

The hortatory subjunctive is usually found in the main clause of a sentence, expressing a futuristic and potential character. In one instance it occurs in a relative clause with that same significance (Heb 12:28: ἔχωμεν χάριν, δι’ ᾧς λατρεύωμεν, “Let us be thankful and so worship [NIV]).³⁴

Future Indicative as Equivalent to Aorist Subjunctive?

In a previous study³⁵ the use of the future indicative in places where normally an aorist subjunctive would be expected has been considered. There are a few places where this may be true among the relative clauses. In Mark 8:35 and Acts 7:7 the simple relative with ἦν or ἦσθαι is followed by the future indicative. Both are indefinite relative clauses that normally use the subjunctive. In Matt 12:36 a clause with the future indicative is introduced by πᾶν . . . ὃ, which often is indefinite. If the future indicative is understood as subjunctive, the clause would be indefinite and the sense “whatever idle word men should speak.” This would fit the context well. But the particle ἦν is not present, and the sense could conceivably be definite, “every specific word which men shall speak.”

³⁴BDF (p. 191, §377) translates the clause, “through which let us worship.” A freer translation is, “Let us take our grace and by it let us worship.”

³⁵See my article, “Subjunctives,” 16–17.

In Luke 11:6 the relative is followed by a future indicative that, if understood to function like a subjunctive, could be an example of a deliberative question indirectly quoted in a relative clause. However, the simple future indicative seems more probable.

Imperative

An imperative verb occurs after a relative in 9 instances, but in none of them does the relative have anything to do with the mood. A relative clause frequently introduces a new statement by attaching it subordinately to the preceding one (see the discussion above under “Adjectival Relative Clauses). The new statement may be imperatival, with an imperative verb. This use of the relative clause is parallel to the hortatory subjunctive with a relative. Six such examples are seen in the NT.³⁶

Three other imperatives in relative clauses are to be explained otherwise. They are found in clauses involved with the alternating use of the relative. This alternating relative may put together sets of words, phrases, or clauses. In Jude 22–23 three imperatival clauses are put together in this manner: “have mercy on some [οὓς μέν] . . . , save others [οὓς δέ] . . . , on some have mercy [οὓς δέ].”

Participle

The alternating use of the relative also explains the two participles which follow relatives in Mark 12:5, “beating some, and killing others.” The two participles are not verbs governed by the relative, but rather are two phrases put in an alternating relationship.

A FEW PROBLEMATIC PASSAGES

The purpose of language is to communicate, not to confuse, and usually it works very well. But when one word is used for another, such as a relative pronoun for an antecedent, there is introduced the potential for a misunderstanding. One of the surprising facts arising out of this study is the rarity of confusion over the identification of antecedents. Almost always the antecedent is quite obvious. However, there are a few instances in which this is not the case. I mention four.

Matthew 26:50

When Jesus spoke to Judas in Gethsemane on the occasion of the betrayal, he said, ἔταῖρε, ἐφ' ὃ πάρει. Two very different understandings have developed out of these words. The problem centers in

³⁶2 Tim 4:15; Titus 1:13; Heb 13:7; 1 Pet 3:3; 5:9, 12.

the use of the relative. Traditional grammarians have tried to treat it as a normal relative pronoun; the phrase ἐφ' ὅ would mean "for which," and the clause would be translated, "Friend, for which you are here." This obviously is incomplete. Two solutions have become popular.

Traditional grammarians have usually supplied the need by inserting a verb at the beginning, not expressed but supplied mentally to make sense of the statement (cf. *NASB*: "Friend, do what you have come for"; most recent translations are similar). Grammatically it is proper, the sense is tolerable, but the question remains, why is the most important word in the statement left unsaid?

In very early times the words were understood quite differently; they were taken as a question, "Why are you here?" The Old Latin and Sinaitic Syriac understood it so, as did Luther's German and the *KJV*, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" There is no conjecture and the sense is more natural to the context. The problem is the pronoun; ὅ is a relative, not an interrogative. Grammarians, under the long-standing dominance of Attic Purists, insisted that the relative *never* was used as an interrogative.

Adolph Deissman³⁷ has shown that this was no longer true in later Greek. He quotes an inscription etched on the side of an ancient Syrian glass wine goblet (first century A.D.): ἐφ' ὅ πάρει; εὐφραίνου "Why are you here? Make merry!" Several other such glasses have been found, and papyrologists attest this interrogative use of the relative for later common Greek. Taking this understanding the sense becomes clear and forceful, "Friend, why are you here?"

2 Peter 1:4

The prepositional phrase, δι' ὧν, is found in 2 Peter 1:4. Since ὧν may be any gender, the only factor of agreement to be checked is number; it is plural. There are three possible antecedents in the context: ἡμῖν (v 3), πάντα (v 3), and δόξη καὶ ἀρετὴ (v 3). If ἡμῖν is the antecedent, then the sense of vv 3–4, is, "given to us . . . through whom (i.e., us) . . . he has given to us promises." This understanding of the passage is awkward and makes poor sense. When πάντα is considered to be the antecedent, the sense is, "given us all things . . . through which (things) he has given to us promises." This, too, is awkward. The last mentioned possible antecedent is the nearest of the three, and makes the best sense: "the One who called us by means of his own glory and virtue, through which he has given promises."

³⁷Adolph Deissman, *Light from the Ancient East*, 4th ed. (New York: Harper, 1922) 125–31.

2 Peter 3:6

This passage also uses the prepositional phrase, δι' ὅν. Two antecedents would fit well the meaning of the passage: the flood waters and the Word of God. But in both cases there are problems of agreement. Five explanations have been suggested. (1) The antecedent is τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ θεοῦ (v 5); it is singular, but God's Word is made up of many words. (2) The antecedent is ὕδατι (v 5); the word is singular, but it used twice (ἐν ὕδατι καὶ ἐξ ὕδατι), and the nature of water is such that singular/plural is not so relevant. (3) ὕδατι plus λόγῳ; together they are plural. However, this is an unlikely combining of two disparate items. (4) The antecedent is οὐρανοὶ καὶ γῆ; a very unrealistic suggestion which does not give good sense to the passage. (5) Variant readings in the text (see NA²⁶) suggest the possibility of copyist error. However, the evidence for this is weak. Of these five explanations I prefer the second.

1 John 3:20

This is a grammatically difficult passage. The problem centers in the fact that the word ὅτι occurs twice in the verse, and one of these seems to be superfluous. There are three basic ways of understanding this text.

One way to solve the grammatical difficulty of this passage is to say that the first ὅτι is not the subordinating conjunction, but the indefinite relative pronoun, ὁ τι. This explanation is plausible since, at the time of the writing of the NT, the continuous writing of words without spaces between them was the almost universal practice. Thus, there would be no written distinction between ὅτι and ὁ τι. Given this understanding, εἴας is indefinite rather than conditional, and ὁ τι εἴας means "whatever." This way of handling the passage has been taken almost universally by modern speech English translations (e.g., *ASV* margin, *RSV*, *Amplified Bible*, Philip's, *NEB* text and first margin, *NASB*, and *NIV*). However, for many reasons I am convinced that this understanding is wrong.

First, the case of ὁ τι (accusative) does not fit. *NASB* translates the clause, "in whatever our heart condemns us"; the case of the indefinite relative pronoun would depend on the verb καταγινώσκω. This verb takes a genitive object to express the fault with which one is being charged.³⁸ The accusative cannot be explained by assimilation, for the antecedent (unexpressed) would not be in the accusative case either.

³⁸BAGD, 409.

Furthermore, if the opening of v 20 was the indefinite relative ὅτι, then the structure of 1 John 3:19–21 would not be consistent with the contrasting structure of opposite conditions so characteristic of this epistle (cf. 1:6–7, 8–9, 10; 2:4–6, 10–11, 15; 3:6, 7–8, 14–15, 17; 4:2–3, 4–6, 7–8, 10; 5:10). One of the ways in which this contrasting structure is introduced is with the phrase, ἐν τοῦτῳ γινώσκομεν, “in this we are getting to know.” The phrase is used nine times in this epistle with only slight verbal variations. Twice (2:5; 3:16) the phrase is followed by an indefinite conditional, “whoever.” Three times (3:24; 4:2; 5:2) it is followed by one side of a contrasting pair, the other side being implied. Three times (2:3; 4:2, 6) it is followed by contrasting, opposite, conditional sentences. 1 John 3:19–21 seems to fit into this last category: “if our heart condemns us [v 20] . . . if our heart does not condemn us [v 21].”

Finally, the interpretation of the passage that results from understanding the opening words to be the indefinite relative is out of character with the rest of this epistle. To paraphrase with an indefinite relative, the passage reads as follows:

We know that we are of the truth and shall persuade our conscience [the probable sense of καρδία here] toward God with respect to anything our conscience may rebuke us for, because God knows us better than we know ourselves; he knows that our conscience is wrong in condemning us. If our conscience does *not* condemn us we already have this boldness toward him.

This interpretation suggests that man is more sensitive about his sin than God is. But 1 John was written to bring assurance of salvation to those who believe (2:3; 5:13). Assurance is gained when one examines his life on the basis of a series of tests that John presents to separate between believers and unbelievers. The evidence of God working in a life is seen when one becomes more loving and more Christ-like, living in purity rather than in sin. Given the interpretation that results from understanding John to have used an indefinite relative, 1 John 3:19–21 would be teaching the opposite of the rest of the epistle; in this one instance one would be told not to worry about his conscience, because God knows that he is better than he thinks he is.

The second basic way to understand this text is to interpret the first ὅτι as a conjunction introducing a nominal, conditional (because of ἐάν) clause that is the direct object of the verb πείσομεν; the second ὅτι is superfluous and should be ignored. The sense is, “We shall persuade our conscience before God that if our conscience condemns us, God is greater than our conscience.” The major problem with this understanding of the grammar is that nowhere in Greek, NT

or otherwise, does πείθω use a ὅτι clause as object. The normal construction uses an infinitive or περί or ἵνα. Also, it leaves the second ὅτι unexplained.

The third way to make sense of this passage is to say that the first ὅτι introduces a causal, conditional clause. The resultant meaning becomes an explanation of the confidence expressed in v 19: “We shall persuade our conscience before God because, if our conscience condemns us. . . .” Thus far the grammar is proper, and the sense is good. But there is still the problem of the second ὅτι. This is variously explained. Some ignore it or drop it. Alford³⁹ sees the clause as causal, and by supplying ἐστίν it becomes “it is because God is greater than our hearts.” A. Plummer⁴⁰ makes it a nominal clause, with δῆλον to be supplied: “it is obvious that God is greater than our hearts.” This makes excellent sense, and there is a possible parallel to the construction in 1 Tim 6:7, where there is a ὅτι clause and in the critical apparatus (NA²⁶) the variant readings show δῆλον ὅτι. Two other examples, but without ὅτι, are 1 Cor 15:27 and Gal 3:11. Some variation of this third basic way of understanding the grammar seems to be the most defensible.

CONCLUSION

The use of relative pronouns and relative clauses in the Greek NT is rich and varied. This study has statistically analyzed the grammatical and semantic functions of relative pronouns and relative clauses. Generally, these functions are obvious, but the use of one word in the place of another (such as a relative pronoun in the place of its antecedent) does introduce the possibility of confusion.

³⁹Henry Alford, *Greek Testament*, New ed. vol. 4 (London: Longmans Greek, and Cambridge: Deighton, Bell & Company, 1894) 480.

⁴⁰A. Plummer, *Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges, The Epistles of St. John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1896) 88.

POLITY AND THE ELDER ISSUE

RODNEY J. DECKER

Any conclusions regarding the function of elders in local churches must take into consideration church polity. Several lines of reasoning suggest that final ecclesiastical authority is vested in local congregations. First, apostolic authority in church matters did not extend beyond the original apostles. Second, several theological principles indicate the importance of every believer in the decision making process of a local congregation. Also, there are several NT examples of churches making decisions corporately. Finally, NT instruction regarding church polity does not contradict these lines of reasoning.

* * *

INTRODUCTION

DEPENDING on one's associations in evangelical Christianity, the subject of the elder's role in church leadership is taken for granted, ignored, or hotly debated. Those who are interested in the role of elders in the church face several important questions. Who are the NT elders and what is their role in the church? What is elder rule? Is a NT church a democratic institution? Are there different kinds of elders? Is each assembly to have a single leader or is multiple leadership required? With whom is final authority vested in the church? This article will seek to address one aspect of these questions: the relationship of church polity to the elder issue. This issue has not received the necessary emphasis in other studies that have appeared.

NEED TO CONSIDER POLITY

Some of the questions concerning the elder's role arise due to a failure to consider other more basic NT doctrines. At the heart of the elder issue is the entire concept of church government. On a practical level this means answering two questions. Where does the final authority lie in a local church? How is Christ's authority functionally

applied and expressed in the local assembly?¹ Although Fee² questions whether the NT teaches a normative church order, it is here argued that congregational church polity does have biblical authority.

APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION AND THE POLITY QUESTION

The twentieth century church cannot hope to duplicate the decision making process of the first century church. Since the NT makes no provision for apostolic succession,³ the contemporary church is unable to include an apostolic role in its polity considerations. The apostles often intervened and made unilateral decisions for the early churches.⁴ Not only was the church in its infancy at this stage, but the

¹Cf. Robert L. Saucy ("Authority in the Church," in *Walvoord: A Tribute*, ed. Donald K. Campbell [Chicago: Moody, 1982] 220): "Since Christ is the Lord of His church, all agree that any valid human authority in the contemporary church can only be an expression of His authority. The solution to church authority thus lies in determining the means of communication and implementation of Christ's authority in the functioning of the church today."

²"If the NT is one's 'sole authority' and that authority does not in fact teach anything directly about church order at the local level, then one might rightly ask whether there is a normative church order." Gordon D. Fee, "Reflections on Church Order in the Pastoral Epistles, with Further Reflection on the Hermeneutics of *Ad Hoc* Documents," *JETS* 28 (1985) 149–50.

³"It must be obvious . . . that the apostles had, in the strictest sense of the term, no successors. Their qualifications were supernatural, and their work, once performed, remains in the infallible record of the New Testament for the advantage of the Church and the world in all future ages. They are the only authoritative teachers of Christian doctrine and law. All official men in Christian churches can legitimately claim no higher place than expounders of the doctrines and administrators of the laws found in their writings." *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, ed. John McClintock and James Strong, "Apostle," 1.311, col. 2; cf. also "Succession, Apostolic," *ibid.*, 10.5–7. Fee's comments are also worth noting. "Although most Protestants in theory deny apostolic succession to reside in its clergy, *de facto* it is practiced in vigorous and sometimes devastating ways—in the 'one-man show' of many denominational churches or in the little dictatorships in other (especially 'independent') churches. And how did such a pluralism of papacies emerge? Basically from two sources (not to mention the fallenness of the clergy whose egos often love such power): (a) from the fact that the local pastor is so often seen (and often sees him/herself) as the authoritative interpreter of the 'sole authority'—Scripture; (b) from the pastor's functioning in the role of authority, thus assuming the mantle of Paul or of a Timothy or Titus. Hence it is based strictly on the use of a paradigm, the validity of which is scarcely ever questioned. Here Protestant 'tradition' [as opposed to biblical revelation] has the final say." Fee, "Church Order in the Pastoral Epistles," 149. Carson likewise observes that "Ironically, some forms of congregationalism elevate the pastor, once he has been voted in, to near papal authority, in practice if not in theory." D. A. Carson, "Church, Authority in," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. W. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984; hereafter cited as *EDT*) 230.

⁴Carson observes that the apostles' "authority extended beyond the local congregation, even beyond congregations they had been instrumental in founding . . . , but it was not without limit." *Ibid.*, p. 228. Later he points out that "The apostles enjoy a

canon of Scripture had not yet been completed.⁵ The apostles' role may not be taken as normative for today. As Saucy points out, "it must be remembered that the church as it is described in the New Testament was in its foundational era. The apostles, as bearers of a unique authority, were still present. Care must be exercised to distinguish that which is normative and permanent from that which belongs peculiarly to the initiatory era."⁶

Other guidelines must therefore be sought. These guidelines may be sought in two ways. Theological principles may be sought which will suggest the appropriate conclusion or at least lend substantial assistance in choosing between alternatives. The second avenue which should be considered relates to the example of the early church.

THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES RELEVANT TO POLITY

There are several theological principles that are relevant to the discussion of a biblical church polity. Only a summary statement of each will be noted here.⁷

Sole Authority of Scripture

The Word of God alone is the believer's sole authority for those things he is to believe and how he is to live. The *sola scriptura* cry of the Reformation must never be lost. Although God has ordained human teachers and has placed some in positions of leadership, he has vested absolute and final authority for matters of faith and practice in the written Scriptures. No believer has authority to dictate the beliefs, lifestyle, or ministry responsibilities of another.

Tradition (despite its compulsiveness) is not authoritative. Peer pressure (strong as it may be) cannot serve as a final guide to doctrine or mores. Not even the great creeds of the church, nor one's favorite doctrinal statement (as necessary as such statements may be in some

self-conscious authority as God-chosen custodians of the gospel; and if they prefer to exercise their authority with meekness in an effort to win spiritually minded consensus . . . , they are also prepared, if need be, to impose their authority without seeking consensus, and even against the consensus." Ibid. As illustrations of this authority, cf. Acts 5:1-11; 8:14-17; 14:23; 1 Cor 4:18-21; 5:3-5; 2 Cor 10:11; 13:2-3; 1 Tim 1:20; Titus 1:5; 3 John 10.

⁵"The real successor to the apostolate is the NT itself, since it contains their ministry within the church of God." R. E. Higginson, "Apostolic Succession," *EDT*, p. 73.

⁶Saucy, "Authority in the Church," 231. For a different perspective, challenging the normativeness of historical events recorded in Acts, but not specifically commanded, cf. Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982) 87-102.

⁷This summary draws heavily on the work of Saucy ("Authority in the Church," 225-30), particularly in items 2-6.

situations) may ever be granted equal authority with the Word of God.⁸

Ministry Responsibility

The authority exercised by the apostles has been encapsulated in the written Scriptures. Yet, as Saucy indicates, there is a sense in which their ministry is continued through the church.⁹ The same basic ministry which the apostles exercised is now entrusted to the church as a whole.¹⁰ This can be categorized in several areas: edification,¹¹ evangelism,¹² service,¹³ and the ordinances.¹⁴ The involvement of specific individuals will vary depending on the spiritual endowments with which God has equipped them. There will be leadership in all these areas, but the responsibility has been entrusted to the entire body. The church as a whole perpetuates an apostolic ministry, though no individual in the church exercises apostolic authority.

Priesthood of All Believers

All believers are priests before God.¹⁵ "Access to the throne of God and to the Word of God is the present and perpetual privilege of

⁸ Earl D. Radmacher, *The Question of Elders* (Portland: Western Baptist, 1977) 2.

⁹ Saucy, "Authority in the Church," 224.

¹⁰ It is true that the church did exercise these ministries prior to the passing of the apostles. Yet the apostles, by virtue of their office, held final authority in all these areas. The point to be made here is that although the church *continues* such ministries, there are no longer apostles present who may override local church decisions. Final authority for ministry is now committed to each assembly.

¹¹ Rom 15:14; Col 3:16.

¹² Acts 8:4; 1 Thess 1:8–10; 1 Pet 2:9; 3:15.

¹³ Gal 6:2; 1 Thess 5:14.

¹⁴ Acts 2:42, 46; 8:12; 9:17–18 and 1 Cor 1:14 illustrate the diversity with which the early church observed the ordinances. There is not a single individual identified as an elder/pastor who administers any of the ordinances in the NT. This is quite different from the popular contemporary practice of many churches in which an ordained pastor is required before any of the ordinances can be legitimately observed. "There is nothing, therefore, that the minister does in his public function that every believer does not also have the right to do. He may lead publicly in such functions at any time, *at the call and commission of the church*" [emphasis in the original]. Craig Skinner, *The Teaching Ministry of the Pulpit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973) 65.

¹⁵ 1 Pet 2:4–5, 9. "As individuals, all Christians are priests alike." J. B. Lightfoot, "The Christian Ministry," in *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (London: Macmillan, 1913; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1953) 185. "Above all [the Church] has no sacerdotal system. It interposes no sacrificial tribe or class between God and man, by whose intervention alone God is reconciled and man forgiven. Each individual member holds personal communion with the Divine Head. To Him immediately he is responsible, and from Him directly he obtains pardon and draws strength." Ibid., 181. Cf. also Alex T. M. Chemung, "The Priest As the Redeemed Man: A Biblical-Theological Study of the Priesthood," *JETS* 29 (1986) 273–75.

every single member of God's family."¹⁶ One would expect, therefore, that there would be specific priestly functions to be performed. This expectation is consistent with the NT picture of the "spiritual sacrifices of praise, good works and personal devotion [which] are incumbent on every church member (1 Pet 2:5; Heb 13:15–16; Rom 12:1)."¹⁷ The OT priestly ministry of the Word¹⁸ can also be compared to the similar ministry of the believer-priest in the NT. "Any service that represents God before the outside world or that ministers to other believers is a function of the priesthood. There is no ministry that rests on a special group; it belongs to the entire church."¹⁹ Believer-priests need to remember and emphasize, not just their privilege of access, but also their commensurate responsibility of service.²⁰

Teaching Ministry of the Holy Spirit

The work of the Holy Spirit in teaching all believers argues that all believers have the responsibility for evaluating all things by the Word. "The Spirit of truth had brought the Word to them. . . . He now continues that ministry by giving them inner witness to the truth, enabling them to accept it as such and to reject the false. That in no way negates the necessity of teachers for the church, but it does give the church the ability and authority to test all things, including teachers (1 John 4:1)."²¹ Since the Word of God is the written expression of his will for the church, it follows that "the application of authority belongs ultimately to those who are responsible for evaluating all things by the truth of the Word."²² This is not limited to a subgroup of the membership (such as all or part of the church officers) but includes all believers in any given local assembly.

Spiritual Gifts

If the Holy Spirit has equipped believers with the spiritual abilities needed to carry out the ministry of the church,²³ then it is consistent

¹⁶ Radmacher, "Elders," 1.

¹⁷ Saucy, "Authority in the Church," 226.

¹⁸ Lev 10:11; Deut 33:10; 2 Chr 15:3; Mal 2:6–7.

¹⁹Ibid. Note also the comment of Skinner: "In practice, however, we fail to apply this high view of the church's nature, and tend to organize ourselves as a group gathered around one or more specialists who are responsible to see that the work of God is effectively fulfilled through *their* service" [emphasis in the original] Skinner, *Teaching Ministry of the Pulpit*, 64.

²⁰ Radmacher, "Elders," 1.

²¹ Saucy, "Authority in the Church," 227.

²²Ibid.

²³ Although some have more recently challenged such an assumption, the consensus of a broad spectrum of scholarly opinion reflects no such uncertainty. Cf., e.g., Morris A. Inch, *Saga of the Spirit: A Biblical, Systematic, and Historical Theology of*

to accept the authority of the individual so enabled to perform that ministry. As Saucy expresses it, there is "a certain diffusion of authority throughout the entire church."²⁴ A certain tension between the formal and individual elements in the structure and authority of a local assembly can be felt in this matter.²⁵ Such an antinomy does not negate the validity of the argument, however. "This does not suggest the autonomous, authoritative operation of each of the spiritually gifted within the body. Rather there is an interplay between the authority of the individual and the body as a whole."²⁶ The point to be made here is that there is a legitimate authority that is as broad as the entire assembly.

Authority and Will of Christ Expressed Collectively

Various forms of polity reflect the final, pragmatic decision making authority in many diverse forms. Churches where the pastor is viewed as the "strong leader" often assume that the will of Christ for the church is expressed through one man. Other churches suppose that God's will is expressed through a select group in the church, whether that be the elders, deacons, or some other designation.²⁷

While not seeking to denigrate the leadership of either the pastor or others charged with leadership or ministry responsibilities in a local church, the biblical concept appears to place greater emphasis

the Holy Spirit (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985) 145–50; J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit* (Old Tappan: Revell, 1984) 81–91; Edwin H. Palmer, *The Person and Ministry of the Holy Spirit: The Traditional Calvinistic Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974) 157–58; Charles C. Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody, 1965) 83–92; John Williams, *The Holy Spirit: Lord and Lifegiver* (Neptune: Loizeaux, 1980) 86–128.

²⁴Saucy, "Authority in the Church," 228.

²⁵"The discussion of gifts of the Spirit often flounders with regard to the institutional structure of the church. Seeing that we have both designated officials and charismatic leadership present in the one fellowship, who is responsible for what? . . . The problem persists so long as we treat it as a contest over who exercises authority." Inch, *Saga of the Spirit*, 146. If a church has designated officials who are organizationally responsible for areas of ministry in which they are not equipped with the necessary gifts, there are bound to be conflicts.

²⁶Saucy, *Authority in the Church*, 228–29.

²⁷John MacArthur's influential advocacy of elder rule has become well known in recent years. Although appreciating much of MacArthur's emphasis in the area of ecclesiology, the present writer must take exception to his policy of elder rule. He contends that "trying to spread the authority over the entire congregation opens up the possibility of division and disagreement. Godly men leading the church is the *sine qua non* [of Grace Community Church]. Christ wants to rule His own church and has chosen to mediate it through a plurality of such godly men." John MacArthur and Fred Barshaw, *Leading the Flock*, 3rd ed. (Sun Valley, Calif.: Grace Community Church, 1982) 32. This view is addressed further below.

on the congregation in matters of final authority. “The will of Christ for the Body can only be expressed collectively.”²⁸ This is based on the fact that Christ is still active in the church. There is no exclusiveness of direction to an elite group.²⁹ Indeed, Paul can exhort all believers to submit, not only to church “leaders” (Πειθεσθε τοῖς ἡγουμένοις ὑμῶν καὶ ὑπείκετε / ‘obey those who rule over you and submit’, Heb 13:17) but also to one another (‘Υποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις / ‘submit to one another’, (Eph 5:21).³⁰

The common thread running through all of the above theological principles is the importance of the congregation corporately in matters of church polity. Although recognizing leadership in various aspects of ministry, the NT emphasizes the significance of every believer, both as part of a local assembly and as a part of the “church which is his body.” There are no little people with God, and there should not be in the church. This is precisely the attitude displayed in the early church.

NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES OF POLITY

The second area that deserves attention in the question of polity is the example of the NT church. Such an endeavor is not as easy as might at first appear. There are widely divergent attitudes toward the use of historical precedence for such purposes. It is very common to assume that the church today is to be as nearly identical as possible to the churches described in the NT, particularly those described in the book of Acts. “By and large, most sectors of evangelical Protestantism have a ‘restoration movement’ mentality. We regularly look back to the church and Christian experience in the first century as the norm to be restored or the ideal to be approximated.”³¹ On the other hand,

²⁸Saucy, *Authority in the Church*, 229. From the context of this remark, Saucy is apparently referring to the local assembly in his reference to “the Body.” Two paragraphs later he says, “only the church together, and not a particular group of leaders, can finally express that [‘christocratic’] authority.”

²⁹“Whereas Christians are encouraged to support and submit to spiritual leadership (e.g., Heb. 13:17), such encouragement must not be considered a blank check if churches are responsible for and have authority to discipline false teachers and to recognize an antecedent commitment not to a pastor but to the truth of the gospel.” D. A. Carson, “Church, Authority in,” *EDT*, 230.

³⁰There is no practical difference between ὑπείκω (a *hapaxlegomenon*) and the more common ὑποτάσσω. This principle can, of course, be abused. It is not intended to imply that 51% of a church vote determines the Lord’s will in any given situation. See Norman Nideng (“Stop the Voting; You’re Wrecking My Church!” *Moody Monthly* [March, 1982] 7–9) for some thought-provoking comments to consider in this regard. A minority may well be right at times. The cure for this abuse is to seek unanimity in decisions, not to delegate decision-making authority to those who are thought to be more spiritual.

³¹Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible*, 88.

it appears to be becoming more popular in recent years to cavalierly dismiss any possible relevance of historical examples of churches from Acts and other NT passages from consideration in ecclesiological discussions.

Fee has well stated the problem posed in seeking to establish normative polity based on NT example.

The hermeneutical problem of Acts, therefore, is a crucial one and touches many parts of Scripture which are basically historical narrative. How is the book of Acts, which *prima facie* narrates a small segment of the early spread of Christianity, to be understood as the Word of God? That is, what is its Word which not merely *describes* the primitive Church but *speaks as a norm* to the Church at all times? Indeed, do such narratives somehow establish normative precedents for succeeding generations? Or are they merely illustrative or informative? If they do have a word for us, and I think they do, how does one discover it, or set up principles in order to hear it?³²

While full discussion of this problem³³ is beyond the scope of this article, the following guidelines are suggested as a basis for understanding the relevance of historical example in the NT as it relates to church polity.

Normative Guidelines for Establishing Polity

Precedence of Doctrinal Passages. Explicit doctrinal passages and commands have precedence over historical narrative.³⁴ There are many doctrinal passages in Scripture, the specific intent of which is to teach particular doctrinal truth or to require specific action of God's people. There are numerous commands addressed specifically to the church. In these instances there is little dispute regarding obligation. Such texts must form the primary basis of ecclesiological decisions.

Historical Precedence Alone. Historical narrative records what *did* happen in a given situation. It does not prescribe what *must* happen in every subsequent situation. Historical precedence alone should never form the basis for normativeness. "On the basis of

³²Gordon D. Fee, "The Genre of New Testament Literature and Biblical Hermeneutics," in *Interpreting the Word of God: Festschrift in Honor of Steven Barabas*, ed. S. J. Schultz and M. A. Inch (Chicago: Moody, 1976) 115.

³³Millard Erickson (*Christian Theology* [3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983–85] 1.120–25) has a helpful discussion of the larger question of identifying "timeless truths" in Scripture.

³⁴Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987–) 1.31.

precedence alone it is probably not valid to say, ‘Therefore, one must.’”³⁵ “Just through being reported as truly happening, no event becomes the revelation of God’s universal will.”³⁶

Scriptural Corroboration. Practices based on historical precedence are most clearly normative if corroborated by principles elsewhere in Scripture. There may not be a specific command addressing the situation, but there may well be relevant theological principles which can be established from other prescriptive passages.³⁷

Noncontradictory. It should be obvious, but for the sake of clarity, a principle claiming support from historical narrative cannot contradict explicit statements found elsewhere in the epistles. “The meaning and principles derived from a story must be consistent with all other teachings of Scripture. A deductive principle drawn from a narrative which contradicts the teaching of some other scriptural passage is invalid.”³⁸

Consistency and Clarity. It is perhaps valid to defend a given practice on the basis of precedence if there is substantial evidence for its practice and that pattern can be demonstrated to be the only pattern present. A consistent and clear pattern must be established. Specifically, polity considerations based on NT example may be valid if the matter is both widespread (the actions of many local churches reflect such a practice) and unique (it is the only way in which the churches did something). “The strongest possible case can be made when only one pattern is found . . . , and when that pattern is repeated within the New Testament itself.”³⁹

Positive Versus Negative. In establishing patterns, it must be recognized that positive patterns are more clear than negative patterns.

³⁵Fee, “The Genre of NT Literature,” 117.

³⁶J. Robertson McQuilkin, “Problems of Normativeness in Scripture: Cultural Versus Permanent,” in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, ed. Earl Radmacher and Robert Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 234.

³⁷“For a biblical precedent to justify present action, the principle of the action must be taught elsewhere, where it is the primary intent so to teach.” Fee, “Genre of NT Literature,” 118. Although addressing a slightly different issue, the following comment is also relevant. “When these injunctions to a specific individual or group parallel general teaching found elsewhere, they may be viewed as normative, but not on their own strength.” McQuilkin, “Normativeness in Scripture,” 235.

³⁸Henry A. Virkler, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 220. Cf. also Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 1.30–31.

³⁹Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible*, 102.

In other words, the fact that something was done is more significant than something that was not done, unless the text explicitly and emphatically states that a specific action was not involved. Arguments from silence are dubious and inconclusive in most instances.

Intention Versus Incidentals. Exegesis must emphasize the intention of the passage rather than incidental allusions.⁴⁰ Historical narrative texts record numerous minor details. Although accurate descriptions of what actually happened, they are not to be elevated to the primary, didactic level unless the writer is clearly representing these details as significant to his primary thesis.⁴¹ On a related matter, it should be noted that “extensive passages on a subject take priority for theological purposes over brief allusions.”⁴²

Normative Guidelines and the Question of Polity

If the NT passages are considered in which a local assembly of believers conducts what might be termed “church business,” a clear pattern emerges apart from the apostolic role. If a clear and consistent pattern can be established which is consonant with the theological principles referred to above, and is within the scope of the normative guidelines enumerated above, it would seem to be questionable to defend an alternative approach on the basis of pragmatic considerations.⁴³ The following paragraphs will summarize the various aspects of functional authority in the local church that are evident in the book of Acts and the NT epistles.⁴⁴

⁴⁰Fee, “Genre of NT Literature,” 116.

⁴¹They may, of course, illustrate specific teaching recorded elsewhere.

⁴²Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 1.31.

⁴³Whether or not something works has little to do with establishing the validity of the method employed. The philosophy and methodology of pragmatism is all too prevalent in contemporary churches. Godly decisions, however, must be based on biblical revelation. Similar to the pragmatic appeal is the claim that it really doesn’t matter how the church is governed. Edward J. Carnell (“The Government of the Church,” in *Basic Christian Doctrines*, ed. C. F. H. Henry [New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971] 252) suggests that “the ministry of rule, like other auxiliary ministries of the church, is free to develop its office according to the needs of the times. In the actual life of the fellowship, therefore, divergent modes of government may emerge. These modes may be the result of rich cultural and social influences. Or they may simply grow out of the dictates of expediency.” Lewis Sperry Chafer (*Systematic Theology* [8 vols.; Dallas: Dallas Seminary, 1948] 4.150) likewise says, “church government is a mere convenience which serves a limited purpose.”

⁴⁴The warning of Carson (“Church, Authority in,” 230) needs to be remembered in this connection. “Modern models [of church government] are not so much wrong as frequently lopsided, favoring a prejudicial selection of the NT data.”

Disciplinary Action

The NT discusses disciplinary actions of various sorts that might be encountered in a local church context. A basic question regarding church discipline is critical to the issue of authority and polity: "Who has authority to exercise discipline?" A wide diversity of practice can be observed in this regard. In some assemblies, the congregation exercises this function. In other churches it is handled by the pastor, a committee, or by the "board" (whether elders, deacons, or some other designation). Is there any biblical pattern? The central passages regarding church discipline in the NT are 1 Corinthians 5 and 6, 2 Corinthians 2, 2 Thessalonians 3, and 1 Timothy 5.⁴⁵ The only aspects of these passages which are immediately relevant are those which specify the final seat of authority in the local church setting.

In 1 Corinthians 5 it is obvious that the Lord Jesus is the final authority (v 4: ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ, . . . τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ / 'in the name of our Lord Jesus, . . . the power of our Lord Jesus'). The concern of this study, however, relates to the functional application of Jesus' authority in a local assembly of believers. Two factors stand out in the Corinthian account. First, the apostle Paul exercises authoritative direction (v 3: ἥδη κέκρικα / 'I have already judged'). Second, that judgment must be implemented by the assembled church in Corinth (v 4: συναγθέντων ὑμῶν / 'when you are gathered').

The Corinthians had only two choices. Either obey the apostolic directive by disciplining the immoral brother, or disobey by refusing to do so. In spite of the clear-cut choice, Paul did not personally exercise this discipline. He placed the responsibility (and authority) for doing so in the hands of the local congregation. He does not charge the pastor (or elders) or the deacons with this task. It is clearly a congregational matter.

2 Corinthians 2 points to a similar picture. The traditional assumption is that this chapter recounts the restoration of the disciplined individual after he repented and sought forgiveness. Paul points out that the original punishment was imposed ὑπὸ τῶν πλειόνων / 'by the majority' (v 6).⁴⁶ His instructions regarding forgiveness and restoration

⁴⁵ Galatians 6 is certainly also relevant to the matter of discipline. It is not considered in this section because there is no explicit reference either to the involvement of the church corporately, or to the elder(s) of the church. Instead the emphasis is on the responsibility of individual Christians (note the use of σεαυτόν, ἀλλήλων, έαυτόν, and ἔκαστος in vv 1-5). Certainly church leaders, whatever their designation, ought to qualify as part of the ὑμεῖς οἱ πνευματικοί / 'you who are spiritual' group, but that is perhaps implied, not stated.

⁴⁶ Cf. C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1959) 108. Although it might be discussed how this majority

(vv 7–8) are addressed to the church as a whole (ὑμᾶς, the plural referring to “the church of God in Corinth,” 1:1).

Paul’s instructions in 2 Thessalonians 3 should also be included in discussions of church discipline. The Thessalonian problem was not immorality but laziness. In such cases the church was to refuse to associate with the offending individuals (vv 6–15). Whether or not this form of discipline entailed a formal church action as depicted in 1 Corinthians 5 is unspecified.⁴⁷ In any event, the responsibility for obedience is placed on the church as a whole. The command (*παραγγέλλω*), based on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ (v 6: ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ / ‘in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ’), is directed to “you, brothers” (ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί; identified in 1:1, 3 as “the church of the Thessalonians”).

As has already been pointed out, there are no longer apostles who continue to propound binding instructions. With no provision for the perpetuation of such a role, the church is left with the pattern of congregational responsibility and authority in matters of discipline.

Two remaining areas related to church discipline also evidence the same pattern. 1 Corinthians 6 indicates that the church has a varied role in arbitrating disputes between members. Although there are difficulties in these verses, Paul does appear to place this authority in the hands of the church as a whole. Certainly there is no statement in the context that authorizes either pastor, deacons or elders to function in this way. It is “before the saints” (ἐπὶ τῶν ἁγίων, v 1) that such matters are to be settled. This may well be implemented by the congregation designating a wise individual or individuals to adjudicate.⁴⁸ The point to be made here is that it is the local congregation which possesses such authority, not a select group in the church (such as the elders).

Disciplinary action may also at times be necessary against an elder according to 1 Tim 5:19–20.⁴⁹ An elder is not a “super-saint”

conducted business, it is clearly a reference to action taken by the congregation: ὑπὸ τῶν πλειόνων answering to συναγθέντων ὑμῶν in 1 Cor 5:4.

⁴⁷This may be, as F. F. Bruce (*1 & 2 Thessalonians* [Waco: Word, 1982] 210) suggests, “a less severe degree of dissociation than that laid down in 1 Cor. 5:9, 11.”

⁴⁸Note v 4: ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ . . . καθίζετε / ‘appoint as judges . . . in the church’ and in v 5: οὐτως οὐκ ἔνι ἐν ὑμῖν οὐδεὶς σοφός ὃς δυνήσεται διακρίναι ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ; / ‘Thus, is there not even one among you who is able to judge between his brother [and his opponent]?’

⁴⁹Joh. Ed. Huther (*Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to Timothy and Titus*, in *Meyer’s Commentary on the New Testament* [11 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1883; reprint, Winona Lake, Ind.: Alpha, 1979] 9.173) points out the connection of these verses with the preceding context: “The apostle now defines the proper conduct on Timothy’s part towards the presbyters who do not superintend the church καλῶς but expose themselves to blame, thereby doing hurt to their official influence.”

who never sins. He is subject to the same frailties and failures as are all of God's people. Yet he is unique in that he holds an official church position.⁵⁰ The apostle Paul sought to balance these two factors and provide the necessary safeguards. Elders may be disciplined, yet if such charges are ever made, they must be handled with great care. If an accusation (v 19: κατηγορία⁵¹) is to be considered, it must be substantiated by two or three witnesses.⁵² Assuming that this charge proves to be valid and worthy of disciplinary action, public action (v 20: ἐνώπιον πάντων / 'before all')⁵³ is to be taken. In this case, the discipline takes the form of a rebuke (v 20: ἐλέγχω). "The imperative 'rebuke' means more than a reprimand; it denotes an admission of guilt and the subsequent conviction of the sinner. The errant elder must become aware of his wrong and be convinced of

⁵⁰"This is required, as a special precaution, in the case of the elder, both because his position creates a presumption in his favor, and because, as a minister, he is peculiarly exposed to malice, and his reputation and influence might be seriously injured by the entertaining of a charge, though on the trial he was acquitted. The influence of even the best minister might be destroyed, if idle gossip and social tattling were accounted a sufficient ground for serious charges and judicial proceedings." H. H. Harvey, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, First and Second Timothy and Titus; and the Epistle to Philemon*, in *An American Commentary*, ed. Alvah Hovey (7 vols.; Valley Forge: Judson, 1890) 6.66.

⁵¹Robert Gromacki (*Stand True to the Charge: An Exposition of 1 Timothy* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982] 146) suggests that this accusation refers to the sin identified in Titus' list of elder qualifications: "One Qualification for an elder is that he be 'not accused of riot or unruly' (Titus 1:6). The 'accusation' (*katēgorian*) mentioned in this verse [1 Tim 5:19] probably refers to that specific type of sin." Titus' comment, however, relates to the elder's *children*, not to the elder himself. Κατηγορία should be given a wider meaning in this passage. The nature of the accusation is not identified, other than if proved valid, it is called ἄμαρτία / 'sin'.

⁵²This is first found in the principle of Deuteronomic law (Deut 17:6; 19:15) and reaffirmed by Jesus (Matt 18:16). Paul uses the same principle in 2 Cor 13:1.

⁵³"Public" here is probably before the community of believers, not "those without" (τῶν οὐκωθεν, 1 Tim 3:7). However, Huther (*Handbook*, 173–74) would restrict this even further: "The most natural reference of πάντες . . . is to the presbyters. . . . It would clearly be too much to expect that Timothy should punish *all* sinners before the whole church . . . ; that would be unsuitable, even in the case of presbyters who had sinned." Cf. also Ralph Earle, "1 Timothy," in *Expositors Bible Commentary* [hereafter: EBC] 11.381. The general tenor of the NT passages dealing with discipline suggests, however, that such action would be suitable before the whole church. Harvey (*Pastoral Epistles*, 67) notes that "the public position of the offenders made their sin public, and there was, therefore, the more danger of its infecting others. A public rebuke in such case would at once vindicate the church from complicity with the sin, and deter others from falling into it . . . Here he speaks of a formal church censure, after due public conviction, and which therefore would be administered as from the church." Cf. also Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, ed. E. F. Harrison (4 vols.; Chicago: Moody, 1958) 3.353.

it.”⁵⁴ This also serves as a warning to the other elders (*οἱ λοιποὶ*),⁵⁵ of whom there were a plurality at Ephesus (Acts 20:17).

The question that remains relates to the vestiture of such authority. In 1 Timothy 5, it is given to Timothy himself as an apostolic representative.⁵⁶ Timothy is nowhere called the pastor of the church in Ephesus, nor do any statements imply that he functioned as such. The other elders at Ephesus (who were not involved in a particular disciplinary charge) are pictured as *observers* rather than as administrators of the discipline. It is thus illegitimate to consign this disciplinary authority to the pastoral office. Since there are no longer apostles (or apostolic representatives) and since the elders appear to be outside the picture in 1 Timothy, it appears that the only possible choice is to vest such authority in the church corporately.

Inter-Church Relationships

Several instances of inter-church relationships can be seen in the NT. The three key passages in this case are Acts 15 and 18, and 2 Corinthians 8.

In Acts 15 a major doctrinal issue is the focus of quite sharp debate in the church at Antioch. The questions raised were not able to be resolved even with an apostle present.⁵⁷ To resolve the circumcision/salvation issue, the church undertakes a cooperative “problem resolution” effort with the “mother church” in Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas (along with several others) are appointed (*εἵταξαν*⁵⁸) to

⁵⁴Gromacki, *Stand True*, 148.

⁵⁵The *οἱ λοιποὶ* / ‘the rest’ could conceivably refer to the other members of the church, but the context favors limiting the reference to the other elders. The principle, of course, is true of the entire church, but this is not explicitly stated here (as it is in Acts 5:11).

⁵⁶Both imperatives in 1 Tim 5:19–20 are second person singular: *παραδέχου*, *ἔλεγχε*. On the basis of 1 Thess 1:1; 2:6 it is also possible to view Timothy (along with Silas) as an apostle. Some argue for a nontechnical use of *ἀπόστολος* in this context but still maintain apostolic authority despite their not having seen the risen Christ. Cf. Robert L. Thomas, “1, 2 Thessalonians,” in *EBC*, 11.253.

⁵⁷It could well be that there were *several* apostles present if Barnabas is accorded apostolic status equal with Paul (as Acts 14:14 would seem to imply).

⁵⁸Aorist indicative active of *τάσσω*. The subject of this verb is not specified in the sentence. The antecedent must be the *ἀδελφούς* / ‘brothers’ of Acts 15:1. This is further clarified by the explanatory *ἐκκλησίας* / ‘church’ in v 3. Note also the verb used to describe the relationship of these messengers to the sending church: *προπεμφθέντες* / ‘those who were sent’. *Προπέμπω* could be used merely to specify the financial assistance provided for their journey (as in Rom 15:24), but in conjunction with *τάσσω* / ‘to appoint’ (v 2) it is probably broader and includes the local church authorization as well. “The reference in v 3 to being sent ‘by the church’ (*ὑπὸ τῆς εκκλησίας*) gives the context for Luke’s use of *etaxan*, so that we should understand ‘they’ as signifying the involvement of the entire congregation at Antioch and its leaders in the appointment.” Richard N. Longenecker, “The Acts of the Apostles,” in *EBC*, 9.443.

represent the church of Antioch. In the course of events described in this chapter the apostles and elders take the lead in considering the question.⁵⁹ The comment by James (v 19) should not be taken in a legal sense as if he were personally issuing an authoritative verdict, but rather as an expression of his personal opinion or judgment in the matter.⁶⁰ As one would expect, the wording formulated by a key leader is accepted as the appropriate summary of the group deliberation. The matter does not rest at this point, however. Luke's record again returns to the congregations, both in Jerusalem and in Antioch (note vv 22, 30). As sister churches worked together in the resolution of a doctrinal matter, the final authority in each instance was lodged in the church corporately, even though the apostles and elders play key leadership and deliberative roles.⁶¹

Another instance of inter-church relationships can be observed in Acts 18, though not in the detail of chap. 15. Apollos is the key figure in this instance. At Ephesus his limited knowledge of the gospel message is greatly expanded under the tutelage of Priscilla and Aquila. When he later desires to minister in Achaia, where there was already a church in existence, the brothers in Ephesus provided both the encouragement and opportunity to do so. As Apollos was yet comparatively unknown, the Ephesian church provided him with a letter of introduction and reference to the believers in Achaia. Although the specific details as to how such a letter was drafted or authorized are not known, Luke presents it as a church-to-church situation.⁶²

The charitable collection for the Jerusalem church in their time of distress also illustrates the interrelationships of the early churches.

⁵⁹Note especially vv 6 and 22–23. Peter and James are particularly prominent in their leadership role within the larger group ($\piᾶν τὸ πλῆθος$) of apostles and elders. Or does $\piᾶν τὸ πλῆθος$ refer to the church, as Gilmore ("Does the Bible Teach Congregational Rule?" *Baptist Bulletin* [Feb. 1987] 15) asserts? "Inferred here is the idea that the multitude had just finished listening to Peter. In other words, the apostles and elders *were not* in executive session." That is a possible conclusion, but not one mandated by the text.

⁶⁰The translation of $\kρίνω$ by the word *judgment* (NIV and NASB) or *judge* (NKJV) is preferable to the traditional *sentence* (KJV). Cf. BAGD 451.

⁶¹"The case is laid before the apostles and elders (15:4); 'the apostles and elders, with the whole church' (15:22), make the final decisions; and the apostles and elders write the letter (15:23). Peter speaks as an apostle, James as an elder; it is not obvious that either 'chaired' the meeting. But even if James did so, the crucial decisions were taken by the apostles, elders, and the church in concert." D. A. Carson, "Church, Authority," 229. This does not appear to correlate with John MacArthur's contention that the elders "are to determine doctrinal issues for the church" and that they are "to determine church policy (Acts 15:22)" (*Questions about Elders* [Panorama City, Calif.: Word of Grace Communications, 1984] 12, 13).

⁶²Although the word $\ékklesia$ / 'church' does not appear, that is the obvious reference of $\áδελφοι$ / 'the brothers' and $τοῖς μαθηταῖς$ / 'the disciples' in v 27. Such matters were probably handled much more informally in the early church than is the tradition in many churches today.

Paul's comments in 2 Corinthians 8 are written in that context. As part of his efforts to avoid any suspicion or criticism in the way the funds were being handled (vv 20–21), several men were jointly administering the collection. The first trustee was Titus. Although the second man is unknown by name, he is described as χειροτονθεὶς ὑπὸ τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν / 'chosen by the churches'. Although χειροτονέω can mean simply 'appoint', it is more likely in the present context that it designates an official vote of the church.⁶³ (Ignatius frequently uses the same word in referring to similar instances in which church envoys are elected to represent the home church in matters relating to a congregation in another city.⁶⁴) This would imply that Paul considered congregational authority to be the proper basis for such matters. The congregational pattern in inter-church affairs appears to be the only one known in the NT.

Intra-Church Affairs

In two passages from Acts the local workings of the NT church can be observed. Both the Jerusalem church (in chap. 6) and the Antiochene church (in chap. 13) illustrate once again the congregational basis of NT polity.

From a polity perspective, Acts 6:1–6 can be quickly summarized.⁶⁵ The church faced a significant problem. The Twelve, who were

⁶³ Historically, the etymology of the word included the idea of raising or extending the hand (*χείρ + τείνω*). Although the hand gesture soon became "optional" (in that other means were used, and this as early as the 5th century B.C. [Lohse, *TDNT*, 9.437]), the sense of popular election was retained. The usual meaning ("choose, elect by raising hands, then gener., esp. of election or selection for definite offices or tasks," BAGD, 881) is probably in view in 2 Corinthians 8. The very broad sense of 'appoint' is possible (normally the subject is explicitly identified if this is the case), but unlikely. If so the emphasis is on the elected (means unspecified) representative's official appointment to his task by the local church or churches involved. Paul's emphasis on avoiding criticism would seem to demand a broad based election instead of selection by the elders alone (as MacArthur [*Questions about Elders*, 20] assumes). The reference to elders being appointed by Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14:23 illustrates the use of χειροτονέω in the sense "appoint," but that does not affect the current discussion. As apostles they had authority to do so. The passage cannot be used to argue that elders are to be appointed rather than elected by the congregation. "Appointment" in the post-apostolic era simply raises the question as to who has such apostolic authority.

⁶⁴ The references can be found in BAGD 881. Given the radical shift in emphasis by Ignatius on the authority of the bishop (when compared, e.g., with Polycarp and Clement) it is significant that he maintained congregational authority in such inter-church matters. *The Didache* also uses χειροτονέω to refer to churches electing/choosing their own overseers and deacons: Χειροτονήσατε οὖν ἔπισκόπους καὶ διακόνους / 'therefore, elect for yourselves overseers and deacons' (15.1).

⁶⁵ That is not to say that this is an easy section to interpret otherwise. For an exceedingly helpful discussion of the other difficulties, cf. Longenecker, *EBC*, 9.326–32.

the only “official” leaders in the church at this point, were not able to personally handle the additional oversight necessary to resolve the matter. They did, however, propose a solution. This recommendation was presented to the entire group of believers, referred to in v 2 as τὸ πλῆθος τῶν μαθητῶν / ‘the assembly of disciples’.⁶⁶ The believers (here called ἀδελφοί / ‘brothers’) were advised to select from their own number a group of seven men to administer the debated needs. The congregational involvement is evident in the implementation of this solution recorded in v 5: ἦρεσεν ὁ λόγος ἐνώπιον παντὸς τοῦ πλήθους / ‘the word pleased the whole assembly’⁶⁷ and also ἔξελέξαντο / ‘they chose’.⁶⁸ That the apostles laid their hands on the men selected by the assembly does not detract from the congregational emphasis.⁶⁹ With the apostles still on the scene exercising their God-given authority over the church one would expect no less. The laying on of hands designated the apostles’ approval and authorization for these men to exercise the delegated authority.⁷⁰ In this instance it is noteworthy that a congregational emphasis is present even with apostles present.

Acts 13 begins as a local matter, but eventuates in the first of the Pauline missionary journeys. Only three verses describe the church proceedings in Antioch—the clipped style prompting wishes for more detail.⁷¹ The situation is generally clear. The church is being served by five men described as προφῆται καὶ διδάσκαλοι / ‘prophets and teachers’ (v 1).⁷² During a meeting of the church,⁷³ a prophetic oracle

⁶⁶Cf. the discussion of τὸ πλῆθος and its parallel in the Qumran community in ibid., 9.332 and the references there.

⁶⁷This awkward phrase is a semitism arising from the spoken Jewish-Greek. Cf. BDF, p. 3, n. 5. It is nicely expressed by the NIV’s “This proposal pleased the whole group.”

⁶⁸The third plural carries on the reference to παντὸς τοῦ πλήθους.

⁶⁹“Whom they set before the apostles’ makes the impression that it took some time to effect the election, and that the apostles entrusted the election entirely to the congregation. They, too, were the ones to be satisfied. After the election had been held, these seven were certified as the congregation’s choice.” R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1934) 246.

⁷⁰These may well be the first deacons, although that conclusion (not explicitly stated in the text) is not necessary to the establishment of the congregational polity illustrated here. Elders, of course, are not mentioned by title until Acts 11:30.

⁷¹Longenecker, EBC, 9.417.

⁷²The relationship of each of the five men to the two descriptive words is debated. For the possible conclusions, cf. Longenecker, EBC, 9.416 and I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 215.

⁷³The subject of λειτουργούντων / ‘worshiping’ (v 2) is not specified. It seems best to conclude that it refers to the service of the entire church, not just the prophets and teachers. Cf. Marshall, *Acts*, 215 and Longenecker, EBC, 9.416.

directs that Barnabas and Saul be set apart for a special ministry. The polity question revolves around the identity of those who commissioned Barnabas and Saul in v 3. "We may infer from the parallel usage in 15:2 . . . and from the descriptions of early church government in 6:2–6 and 15:4–30 . . . that the whole congregation, together with its leaders, was involved in attesting the validity of the revelation received, laid hands on the missionaries, and set them out."⁷⁴ If this is the proper conclusion, then the congregational pattern seen elsewhere in Acts remains consistent.

NEW TESTAMENT INSTRUCTION REGARDING POLITY

There is no didactic text in the NT which gives specific instructions regarding church polity, hence the importance of the theological principles and NT examples summarized above. One major passage proposed as a basis for elder rule is 1 Tim 5:17.

This verse does not contradict the principle of congregational government. It teaches that every elder should both rule and teach, and emphasizes the elder's duty to study diligently in order to teach. As Kent says, "This verse does not give sufficient warrant for the Reformed view of two classes of elders, those who ruled and those who taught. Every elder engaged in teaching (3:2). However, some would do so with more energy and excellence than others."⁷⁵ There are no ruling elders distinct from teaching elders in the biblical sense, though unfortunately this has been assumed in many churches.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Longenecker, *EBC*, 9.417. Likewise Everett F. Harrison (*Interpreting Acts*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986] 215–16): "What persons are being indicated by the phrase 'While they were worshipping the Lord—the prophets and teachers or the church? Since the praying and sending forth of two from this group was almost certainly undertaken by the church as a whole (v.3) and no change of subject is indicated from verse 2, it is probable that the ministering (or worshipping) applies to the congregation. If the ministering were intended to refer to the gifted men only, it would be natural to say that they were ministering to the church rather than to the Lord. Furthermore, it is questionable that the Holy Spirit would reveal His will for the church to the leaders only rather than to the entire congregation assembled for worship." Cf. also F. F. Bruce (*The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*, 2nd ed. [London: Tyndale, 1952] 254): "The whole church sent them forth, and it was to the whole church that they gave their report when they returned. Cf. xiv.26f."

⁷⁵ Homer A. Kent, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Chicago: Moody, 1958) 181–82.

⁷⁶ Contra Glasscock ("The Biblical Concept of Elder," *BSac* 144/573 [1987] 77): "All elders are to be 'able to teach' . . . , but [1 Tim] 5:17 seems to imply a more formal type of public exhortation not expected of all the elders." There is considerable diversity even among those who contend for a distinction. For representative positions, note the following: Bornkamm, *TDNT*, 6.667; Patrick Fairbairn, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1874; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1956) 213; and William Hendrickson, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1957) 179.

The terms ‘teaching elder’ and ‘ruling elder’ do not appear historically until Calvin. 1 Tim 5:17 refers to elders who are ruling well—not to a class of “ruling elders.” The noun is οἱ πρεσβύτεροι, modified by the participle προεστῶτες, which is further qualified by the adjective καλῶς. It is thus the “well-ruling elders,” not the “good, ruling-elders.” To create two classes of elders also ignores the force of the superlative adverb μάλιστα. Paul contends that an elder who rules well is worthy of double honor. This is “especially” (μάλιστα) true, he says, of those elders who not only rule well, but also labor in the word and doctrine. He is not referring to two separate classes of elders, but rather indicating in a comparative manner how worthy they really are. “This text only shows that one office of presbyter or bishop involved two kinds of labor, and that certain presbyters or bishops were more successful in one kind than in the other.”⁷⁷

The responsibility to rule in 1 Tim 5:17 can be understood in the context of the home (τοῦ ἴδιου οἴκου καλῶς προΐσταμενον / ‘the one who manages his own household well’), carried over from 3:4–5,⁷⁸ or in the context of the duties of the overseer’s realm of authority in the church (3:1).⁷⁹ The latter option seems more likely. When the pastor’s teaching ministry is applied to his leadership role as an overseer he will be able to equip the members of the congregation for ἔργον διακονίας / ‘a work of ministry’ (Eph 4:11–12). The church will prosper when individuals besides the pastor function in administration, exhortation, showing mercy, evangelism, etc. They may be able (when properly equipped) to have a ministry which is potentially more effective than even the pastor in those ministries. It is for this reason that this particular kind of elder (who applies his teaching gift to “ruling”) is worthy of double honor.

MacArthur’s use of this passage also needs to be examined. He asserts that the word προΐστημι in 1 Tim 5:17 and elsewhere authorizes the elders to govern the church. There appears to be little or no accountability to the congregation in his system. He states, “As those who rule in the church, elders are not subject to any higher authority outside the local assembly.”⁸⁰ This statement might be taken to mean that they are subject to the authority of the local assembly, but that is apparently not his intention. In the preceding context he has stated

⁷⁷A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1907) 915.

⁷⁸This passage is the only other use of προΐστημι in relation to the elder (technically ἐπίσκοπος / ‘overseer’ in 1 Timothy, and the only reference which specifically states what it is that the elder is to rule.

⁷⁹The only passage that may directly link the use of the word προΐστημι with both the elders and the church is 1 Thess 5:12: εἰδέναι τὸν κοπιῶντας ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ προΐσταμένους ὑμῶν ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ νοοθετοῦντας ὑμᾶς / ‘respect those who labor among you and rule over you in the Lord and admonish you’.

⁸⁰MacArthur, *Questions about Elders*, 12. Cf. also the quotation in n. 27, above.

with regard to elders that “there is no higher court of appeal, and no greater resources to know the mind and heart of God with regard to issues in the church.”⁸¹ In an earlier syllabus the statement is made that “There is no higher earthly authority in the New Testament than the Elders of the local assembly.”⁸² A congregational qualification is appended a few pages later in the syllabus. “The congregation will (and has the right to) react negatively to non-unanimous decisions, but cannot argue with effect against unanimity in the Spirit.”⁸³ While the present writer would certainly concur with the congregation’s right to intervene, the narrow window of authority granted above (only when the elders are not in unanimous agreement) does not do justice to the biblical principles of congregational authority.

The evidence cited to support these contentions is not accurate. MacArthur asserts, “The Greek word translated ‘rule’ in that verse [1 Tim 5:17] is *proistēmi*, used to speak of the elders’ responsibilities four times in 1 Timothy (3:4, 5, 12; 5:17), once in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 . . . , and once in Romans 12:8.”⁸⁴ The problems are three. Two of the references relate to the elders’ responsibility in the home, not the church (1 Tim 3:4, 5). Another text cited (1 Tim 3:12) relates to deacons (and also to domestic responsibilities), not to elders. The Thessalonian passage does not specify that it is restricted to elders. It certainly includes them, but may also include deacons, or perhaps even civil authorities. Likewise Rom 12:8 is not necessarily a reference to elders. The reference there is to someone with the spiritual gift of leadership—they may or may not be an elder.

These considerations leave one explicit use of *προίστημι* in relation to the church, and two others by implication. The question still remains, however, as to the extent of the authority implied. It certainly cannot be an absolute, unlimited authority in every area of church (and church member) life. The only areas of authority specified in this text are the word and doctrine (*λόγῳ καὶ διδασκαλίᾳ*)—certainly insufficient statements upon which to base elder-rule as opposed to congregational government.

When the various aspects of the passage are considered, 1 Tim 5:17 relates, not to church polity as such, but rather to the role and responsibility of the elders for ministry within local assemblies of believers.

CONCLUSION

The term ‘plurality of elders’ is usually associated with a polity which vests ecclesiastical authority in the *πρεσβυτέριον* / ‘council of

⁸¹Ibid., 11.

⁸²MacArthur and Barshaw, *Leading the Flock*, 32.

⁸³Ibid., 36.

⁸⁴MacArthur, *Questions about Elders*, 11.

elders'. Regardless of the conclusion to which one comes on the plurality issue, the preceding paragraphs have sought to demonstrate that congregational polity must be maintained if NT doctrine and example are to be heeded. It is possible for a church to minister with a plurality of elders and still maintain a congregational form of church government. It is also possible to maintain the congregation's authority under a single pastor. Neither conclusion regarding plurality resolves all questions of polity. Nor does a congregational conclusion regarding polity decide the issue of plurality of elders. Questions regarding both polity and plurality need to be considered and interrelated on a biblical basis.

REVIEW ARTICLE

*The Text of the New Testament*¹

DANIEL B. WALLACE

The Text of the New Testament, by Kurt and Barbara Aland. Translated by Erroll F. Rhodes. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987. Pp. xviii + 338. \$29.95. Cloth.

With the long-awaited translation of *Der Text des Neuen Testaments* (1982), English-speaking students may now share in the debt of gratitude owed to the well-known German scholars, Kurt and Barbara Aland. The five-year delay, due to a number of complications, has resulted in more than a translation; the English edition “represents a revision of the original German edition of 1982” (translator’s preface, viii).

Though modeled after Würthwein’s *Der Text des Alten Testaments* (ET: *The Text of the Old Testament* [1979]), the NT counterpart tends to be more practical since a follow-up volume by Kurt Aland for advanced students is in the present time (*Überlieferung und Text des Neuen Testaments: Handbuch der modernen Textkritik*). Nevertheless, the advanced student and scholar alike can profit from this volume: the computer-generated/assisted tables, charts, and collations are, by themselves, worth the price of the book, representing the equivalent of countless thousands of man-hours. This could only have been produced at the Institute for New Testament Textual Research in Munster.

Besides sixty-five plates (all but three of various NT manuscripts), eight tables and six charts (including one two-sided detached fold-out), the Alands have provided the essentials for a thorough introduction to textual criticism: an overview of the history of the printed NT text—from Erasmus to Nestle-Aland²⁶ (=UBSGNT³); a discussion of the interrelation of early church history and NT textual criticism (our appetites are barely whet, however, in the twenty-four pages on this topic); a description of the extant Greek manuscripts, as well as Greek patristic evidence (it should be noted here that readers of Metzger’s *Text of the New Testament*² will find this chapter to be

¹I wish to thank Dr. J. K. Elliott, of the University of Leeds (Great Britain), for examining the first draft of this review and for making several corrections.

²B. M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 2d ed (Oxford: Oxford University, 1968).

quite complementary: whereas Metzger describes in greater detail a few of the more important MSS, the Alands treat us to a *seemingly* exhaustive list of MSS—though giving only the cold, hard facts in each case); a brief presentation of the versional evidence (and non-Greek patristic evidence); expansions and clarifications of the introductions in UBSGNT³, Kurt Aland's two synopses,³ and especially NA²⁶; resources (perhaps too brief) for NT textual criticism; and finally, principles and praxis of textual criticism, orienting almost all of the discussion around real examples.

Positive Observations

The Alands' work includes an extremely helpful and detailed collection of data—almost all of which is found in chapter 3 (“The Manuscripts of the Greek New Testament” [72–180]). For example, tables 7 and 8 show that the Byzantine text did not *become* the majority text until the ninth century (as far as extant witnesses reveal). The many plates interspersed throughout this chapter give almost a ‘hands-on’ feel for textual criticism. But most significantly, in the descriptive list of MSS, *each* MS is listed by textual affinity (though the groupings are far from the traditional text-types). Further, the Alands *demonstrate* their assessment by comparing test-passage readings in the MSS against the Byzantine reading and against the reading of NA²⁶ (which they gratuitously call “the original text”). For example, Vaticanus shares only nine non-original readings with the Byzantine text-type in the gospels, but has 196 non-Byzantine ‘original’ readings (note that these numbers relate only to the *test* passages, not to the entire gospel text of B.) In Paul and the Catholic epistles, B has a slightly lower percentage of non-Byzantine ‘original’ readings and a slightly higher percentage of Byzantine ‘non-original’ readings. This kind of information (based on computer-assisted collations) is invaluable in helping the student to see textual consanguinity in a moment’s notice. This is especially the case among the minuscules where the Alands list over 150, the vast majority of which would *not* fit into the mainstream of the Byzantine text-type (“those with a developed Byzantine text have been omitted . . .” [135]).

Second, chapter 2 (“The Transmission of the Greek New Testament” [48–71]) *begins* to fill a much needed void in text-critical studies (though the treatment here is hardly more than an outline). As the Alands state, “New Testament textual criticism has traditionally neglected the findings of early Church history, but only to its own injury, because the transmission of the New Testament text is certainly an integral part of that history” (49). In particular, the relation of the canon to textual criticism and the continued paring down of centers for Greek MS production⁴ are important considerations for the textual critic.

³*Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, 12th ed (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1982) and *Synopsis of the Four Gospels*, 7th ed (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1984).

⁴That is to say, as time went on, the production of Greek MSS of the NT became more centralized (and more uniform); the many small local scriptoria gave way to the few larger ones.

Third, students of the Greek NT will especially appreciate chapter 5 ("Introduction to the Use of Modern Editions" [218–62]), for the Alands go to great lengths to clarify what is in the standard 'pocket' edition of the NT, Nestle-Aland²⁶. A profound appreciation for German concision is gained from this chapter: the symbols and abbreviations found in the apparatus as well as the inner and outer margins of NA²⁶, if spelled out, could well fill ten volumes! Much of the material in this chapter does not properly belong to a work on textual criticism, but it is nevertheless a great help to the student who, having read the Introduction in NA²⁶ (39*–78*), still needs assistance in using this Greek NT to its maximum potential.

Fourth, it is refreshing to see two respected *German* NT scholars adamantly reject appeals to conjectural emendation, textual rearrangement, or excision ("the way in which chapter 21 has been attached to the gospel of John argues against any such complex theories as Rudolf Bultmann's, for example" [292]).⁵

Finally, the twelve principles of textual criticism and the very concrete examples of these principles in operation in chapter 7 give the work a very pragmatic thrust and help in illustrating the principles by which Kurt Aland has come to his text-critical decisions as reflected in (his contribution to) the text of NA²⁶–UBSGNT.⁶

Negative Observations

For those who have been introduced to NT textual criticism by reading Metzger's *Text of the New Testament*, with its copious and careful documentation, the Alands' text will appear to be taking a step backwards. There is no bibliography and the footnoting is at best substandard. A veritable avalanche of text-critical dissertations, articles, books and *Festschriften* have been produced since Metzger's second edition went to press. Perhaps Kurt Aland's forthcoming *Überlieferung und Text* will update the bibliography, but it is difficult to hold back some sense of disappointment in the present volume on this score.

Second, the lack of documentation of this work seems to be matched only by its lack of irenic spirit. As significant as the Institute for New Testament Textual Research is for the discipline—E. J. Epp once lamented the probability that there are more bona fide textual critics at the Institute than in all of North America!⁷—one gets the impression that *almost* no one outside the Institute has contributed much of worth to textual criticism in the last two decades. Gordon Fee and Eldon Epp are cited only incidentally in

⁵See other comments on the Pauline corpus on 291–92.

⁶Especially to be noted is the emphasis in these principles on external evidence as normally taking precedence over internal criteria and that "A constantly maintained familiarity with New Testament manuscripts themselves is the best training for textual criticism" (276).

⁷"The Twentieth Century Interlude in New Testament Textual Criticism," *JBL* 93 (1974) 414. See also his follow-up essay which elaborates on this point, "New Testament Textual Criticism in America: Requiem for a Discipline," *JBL* 98 (1979) 94–98.

one footnote (95); J. K. Elliott and J. N. Birdsall are ignored; G. D. Kilpatrick is cited but twice. Conversely, Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad, editors of *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, are mentioned four times—all pejoratively. Obviously a scholarly work needs to critique other views. The tenor in which the critique is done, however, coupled with the overly dogmatic stance, will not be of great benefit to the undiscerning student. On the one hand, some may reject the Alands' viewpoints because of their attitude. This would be a tragedy, for Kurt and Barbara Aland are scholars whose opinions deserve the weightiest consideration. On the other hand, some students may buy both the arguments and the attitude, thinking that nothing else needs to be said about the subject.⁸

Third, much of the Alands' viewpoint is open to criticism in six major areas: (1) Their dismissal of the validity and early date of the 'western' text, for example (cf. 54–55, 181ff.), is based on the premises that (a) since it does not clearly show up in the early papyri (though P²⁹, P³⁸, and P⁶⁸ seem to contradict this), it is not early, and (b) the Itala, since they are not in Greek, do not constitute primary witnesses to any text-type.⁹ As much good as the Alands have done in stressing the tremendous importance of the early papyri, perhaps their assessment of these exclusively Egyptian MSS as giving an accurate picture of the overall transmission of the text in the first three centuries is overly generous. The versional and especially patristic evidence through the third century coupled with relatively sparse and certainly provincial Greek MS evidence for the same period (less than fifty MSS, the vast majority of which are mere fragments) ought to caution against funneling *everything* through the sands of Egypt. (This, of course, is not to say that the *Byzantine* text-type is early for theories must be based on evidence, not arguments from silence.)

(2) The test-passage method for determining textual consanguinity is an imperfect and, at times misleading, method.¹⁰ For example, the Alands found only one place (among their test passages) in Luke where P⁷⁵ had a non-original (i.e., a reading not found in the text of NA²⁶) Byzantine reading (95),

⁸To some degree, this volume tends to be, rather than a handbook on textual criticism, a vindication of NA²⁶ (not UBSGNT³, in spite of their claim of objectivity about the two texts [219]) in terms of its text, apparatus, and general layout. This is clearly seen in the final chapter: in virtually all of the examples of scribal corruption given, the Alands speak dogmatically about what the original read. They give little incentive here for *others* to do textual criticism; in fact, one gets the distinct impression that NT textual criticism is soon to become obsolete since it has almost attained a state of perfection.

⁹Part of the reason that the 'western' text is viewed this way by the Alands is their regard for the versional (and, to some degree, patristic) evidence as merely of supplementary help in informing text-critical decisions.

¹⁰Cf. F. Wisse, *The Profile Method for Classifying and Evaluating Manuscript Evidence*, vol 44 of Studies and Documents, ed I. A. Sparks (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 21–22 for a specific critique; and B. D. Ehrman, "Methodological Developments in the Analysis and Classification of New Testament Documentary Evidence," *NovT* 29 (1987) 22–45 for a more general discussion. Ehrman's article not only shows the inadequacies of several methods used to determine textual affinities, but gives a positive approach to the whole program which he calls "The Complete Profile Method."

yet in H. A. Sturz's more exhaustive research into the early papyri-Byzantine alignments, ten such places were noted.¹¹ No one would, of course, call P⁷⁵ a Byzantine MS, but even this venerated MS has some allies beyond those the test-passage method would suggest. The drawbacks of this method limit the usefulness of the descriptive lists of Greek MSS in chapter 3.

(3) The Alands have misrepresented the view held by Hodges and Farstad (editors of *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*).¹² They call it a "return to the Textus Receptus of Erasmus . . ." (vii), though in reality there are almost 2000 differences between the Majority Text and the TR. The Alands' misunderstanding of the Hodges-Farstad text is evident in their discussion of "Verses Omitted in the 'Standard Text'" (292–300) where they specifically intend to interact with the Majority Text, for of the fifteen passages they discuss, four are also missing in the Majority Text though found in the TR!

(4) As helpful as their "Twelve Basic Rules for Textual Criticism" (275–77) are, not only are some debatable (e.g., their fifth principle is that "the versions and Fathers [serve] no more than a supplementary and corroborative function" [275]; their eleventh rule ['lectio brevior'] they are cautious not to apply mechanically, but they nowhere mention that for *unintentional* errors the longer reading is often to be preferred), but one of the rules is not even followed entirely by Kurt Aland himself. The seventh principle ("that the original reading may be found in any single manuscript or version when it stands alone or nearly alone is only a theoretical possibility" [276]) is overturned in several places in NA²⁶. For example, in Matt 8:18 NA²⁶ has οχλον which is supported only by B sa^{mss}; in Luke 17:23 the reading εκει ω ιδου ωδε is found only in P⁷⁵ B; in John 5:2 NA²⁶ reads βηθζαθα, though it is supported only by κ 33 (it¹) Eusebius (Cyril) (thus, only two Greek MSS with additional 'corroborative' support); οχριστοço ιησους in Acts 17:3 is found only in B and, perhaps, sa^{mss} (though the latter are not mentioned in NA²⁶); Rev 18:3 reads πεπωκαν which has only two minuscules as its total support (1006c 2329) according to NA²⁶ (though UBSGNT³ adds 1828; Hoskier lists 1828 and 2321;¹³ and, most surprisingly, in Rev 21:17 NA²⁶ reads εκατον τεσσερακοντα τεσδαρων, duplicating a *conjecture* found in Westcott-Hort which has, according to Hoskier, *no MS support* (that there is a textual problem here is not mentioned either in the NA²⁶ apparatus, nor the UBSGNT³ apparatus, nor in Metzger's *Textual Commentary*). Apparently, theoretical possibility has become a reality in a few (albeit very few) places in NA²⁶.

(5) Overlapping with the criticism above is the much higher emphasis on external evidence than on internal criteria.¹⁴ (This can be seen clearly by the

¹¹ *The Byzantine Text-Type and New Testament Textual Criticism* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984) 147–49.

¹² 2d edition (Thomas Nelson, 1985).

¹³ J. K. Elliott has informed me that here Hoskier is in error—i.e., for 2321 [=200 in Hoskier's system] in Hoskier we should understand 2329 (cf. Elliott's forthcoming conversion table in *JTS*).

¹⁴ Although their emphasis on external evidence has already been mentioned as a positive point, it is the overemphasis coupled with the negligible treatment of internal evidence to which I am objecting here.

lay-out of the book: internal considerations are discussed only in chapter seven and there only under praxis—no theory is developed for doing internal criticism.)

(6) There are a small number of *fairly* significant misleading statements as well as overstatements: (a) the first two tables (29–30) show the agreements among seven major editions of the NT in the last 100+ years (table 1) and the disagreements between NA²⁵ and these other six (table 2). The amount of variant-free verses (between 45 and 81% for every book in the NT) seems incredibly high, but the Alands qualify it by not counting orthographical variants or verses “*in which any one of the seven editions differs by a single word . . .*” (29, italics added). Many of these verses are not variant-free, therefore, even though they are called such.

(b) The Alands surprisingly claim that “a comparison of the critical apparatuses of Tischendorf and Nestle-Aland²⁶ shows that the latter offers *all the variants cited in Tischendorf (and even more) . . .*” (37, italics added). It is true that the MS discoveries since 1869 have produced more variants, many of which have been incorporated into the apparatus of NA²⁶. But a quick check on a few passages reveals that this claim is an overstatement much, if not most, of the time: in Eph 6:17, NA²⁶ records only the omission to the reading δεξασθε, while Tischendorf also reveals the significant variant δεξασθαι (whether one adopts the imperative or infinitive in this text *can* effect the structure of the whole pericope); in Gal 3:20, NA²⁶ lists no variants while Tischendorf records ογαρ as a variant for οδε. A random check of Tischendorf produced an example on p. 437 (vol. 2) regarding Rom 14:1–4a: in addition to the variants listed in NA²⁶, Tischendorf mentioned three other variant-units: ο δε / ος δε (v 2), εξουθνειτο/-νειτω/κρινετω and ο θεος υαρ / ουαρ θεος (v 3). Obviously, not all of these variants are merely orthographical in nature. Tischendorf is still necessary for a *list* of variants (besides, of course, for the evidence supporting them). On the other hand, Tischendorf will not always be more exhaustive than NA²⁶ in the number of variants recorded. In 3 John, for example, NA²⁶ had about a dozen *more* variants than Tischendorf (and, incidentally, about three times as many as NA²⁵).

(c) The definition of category III describing textual affinities (106) seems a bit of an overstatement: “Manuscripts of a distinctive character with an independent text . . .,” for most of the MSS which the Alands place here have a predominantly Byzantine flavor (though not nearly as uniform as the MSS which they classify as having “a purely or predominantly Byzantine text”). Category III, therefore, tends to give an artificial impression of more MSS having an independent text than is really the case. It might be better to define this category as “manuscripts which have not been *wholly* tampered with by the Byzantine standard.”

(d) On p. 58 it is claimed that “If a fragment preserves a passage where there is any variation in the tradition, it is quite sufficient to signal the textual character of the whole manuscript. There is no need to consume a whole jar of jelly to identify the quality of its contents—a spoonful or two is quite enough!” Perhaps this kind of reasoning is what stands behind the Alands’ test-passage method, and moves the authors to classify codex Alexandrinus as ‘independ-

dent' rather than Byzantine in the gospels (107, but see 50!). Further, it is demonstrably untrue: if only a leaf or two of P⁴⁵ had been discovered—say, of March 7:30–36 (where it shares seven readings with the Byzantine text *against* the Alexandrian and *none* with the Alexandrian against the Byzantine¹⁵—the Alands might be forced to conclude that such a fragment was an early third century Byzantine MS!¹⁶ Textual consanguinity can not always therefore be determined by simply sampling a 'spoonful or two' of a MS's contents.¹⁷

(e) Finally, in attempted to show NA²⁶'s superiority over other texts (UBSGNT³ excepted)—in part by default—the Alands mention that "the circulation of editions formerly in competition with Nestle seems to have subsided" (218). Then they state that the last edition of Merk's *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine* was in 1964. This statement was true in 1982, when the German edition of the Alands' text was published; but it was not true in 1987 (nor in May 1985, when Kurt Aland made his final corrections/revisions of the English edition), for Merk's 10th edition in 1984.

Finally, some minor errata in the work need to be mentioned: the caption for the plate on p. 80 reads "Codex Guelferbytanus (A^e . . .)", but it should read "Codex Guelferbytanus A (P^e . . .)"; "text passages" (95) should read "test passages"; "104^s (107, third line from bottom) should read "104²", the cross reference for 0189 (122) should be to p. 103 rather than to p. 105; "plate 4" (first line, 128) should be "plate 40"; MS 1067 should be labeled Category V in Paul, III elsewhere (132); "Bonafactius Fischer" (170) should be "Bonifatius Fischer"; plate 23 (p. 90) P⁴⁷ should be dated *third* century, not second, and P⁷⁵ (plate 24, p. 91) should be dated "early *third*" rather than "early second." All in all, with the great mass of details covered in this volume, that there are so few errata is commendable to authors and publishers alike.

Conclusion

The Alands' *Text of the New Testament* should serve the academic and ecclesiastical communities well for years to come. Unfortunately, though one could justifiably have expected it to supplant Metzger's handbook (since so much has happened in the nineteen year gap between the two), because of its lack of documentation coupled with its tone, the two should be used together. A second edition, with some work, could correct these deficiencies and render for itself an unqualified commendation.

¹⁵Cf. also Luke 12:21–13:2; John 9:16–35; 10:19–38; 11:19–12:9; Rev 9:20–12:13 for similar 'strings' of Byzantine-papyrus alignments (as well as the list supplied in Sturz, 145–59).

¹⁶Cf. also G. D. Fee's article in *NTS* 15 (1968) 23–44 in which he demonstrates that \aleph has a D-text for John 1:1–8:38

¹⁷One could note further the 'patchwork' text of codex W (which has dramatic shifts in its textual affinities: In Matthew and Luke 8–24 the text is Byzantine; in Mark 1–5 it is 'western'; in Mark 6–11 it is Caesarean; and in Luke 1–7 and John 5:21 it is Alexandrian.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Use of the Bible in Theology: Evangelical Options, edited by Robert K. Johnston. Atlanta: John Knox, 1985. Pp. 257. \$11.95. Paper.

This collection of essays on theological method shows the wide divergence that exists among evangelicals on the questions of biblical inerrancy, biblical authority, hermeneutics and theological method. All of the contributors would accept the statement that Christianity limits its ground of authority to the Bible, but beyond that the articles move in various directions. This is both informative and unsettling, stimulating and frustrating. Furthermore, the title of the book is partially misleading. The articles are primarily focused upon the matters of hermeneutics and theological method. Nevertheless, Robert Johnston of North Park Seminary has done an admirable job in bringing together these representative approaches.

The contributors are well known evangelical theologians and leaders in their various evangelical communities, including Donald Bloesch, Donald Dayton, William Dyrness, Gabriel Fackre, James Packer, Clark Pinnock, Russell Spittler, Robert Webber, David Wells and John Yoder. Johnston's provocative introduction provides a road map for reading the rest of the essays. It should be noted that most of the article are summaries of books previously published by the contributors.

Especially interesting are the articles by Pinnock, Dayton, Spittler, Wells and Fackre. Pinnock's chapter is a commendable evangelical defense of biblical authority in doing theology, not on the nuances of inerrancy but about the primacy of the biblical text in doing theology. Dayton insightfully shows how the modernist-fundamentalist controversy has impacted theological method in America as contrasted with evangelical methodologies in Britain. Spittler's essay is an autobiographical reflection of his attempt to do exegetical theology within the charismatic movement. Fackre and Wells seriously discuss the issues involved in theological method. These last two essays deserve thoughtful reading by serious evangelical theological students. Their goal is similar, but the doing of the task takes different directions for each. Wells' treatment is most satisfying in his distinction between exegesis, doctrine and theology. Fackre's narrative approach is stimulating, but not as satisfying. Unsettling is his flirtation with "second chance" theology for unbelievers.

Other chapters include Packer's Reformed, canonical approach, Bloesch's Christocentric theology, Yoder's Anabaptist renewal methodology, Webber's concerns for the early church's rule of faith and the priority of worship in theological method, and Dyrness's missionary-contextual theology.

This collection of essays raises several questions: Is it possible for a synthesis to be reached? Is it possible to go beyond the common conviction that Scripture is authoritative in theological method? Granted that is the

distinguishing mark among evangelicals, but is a greater commonality in hermeneutics and method possible? It appears that the agenda is set for the upcoming decade. Johnston's work is a helpful starting place for all concerned with this task.

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1 Chronicles, by Roddy Braun. Word Bible Commentary. Waco: Word, 1986. Pp. 312. \$22.95. Cloth.

One of the most prominent figures in post-exilic biblical studies is Roddy Braun, former Professor of Semitic Languages at Concordia Senior College, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Braun's contribution is a welcome addition to OT studies. While numerous commentaries on *Chronicles* are available today, outside of Williamson (NCB) and Myers (AB), there is little to help the English reader, especially those with pastoral and expository concerns.

Though Braun's bibliographies are helpful and complete, he omits Baruch Halpern, "Sacred History and Ideology: *Chronicles'* Thematic Structure—Indications of an Earlier Source" in *The Creation of Sacred Literature*, edited by R. E. Friedman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981, pp. 33–56). In light of Braun's emphasis on textual history, this is a significant omission.

Braun does excellent comparative work in the synoptic sections, often placing the various texts side by side. He discusses in detail the matter of textual history, and is reticent to acknowledge that major parts of the material are from the Chronicler's hand (cf. pp. 24, 25, 28, 72, 79, 81, 99, 100, etc.). While Braun emphasizes the authority of the canon and the final form (per Childs), it is difficult to accept the various proposals of layering and later hands. Certainly we would acknowledge scribal activity in the OT text, but the consistent propensity to adduce extensive reworking (cf. his comment concerning Moses and the Torah, p. 228) is unjustified.

Braun has correctly approached the book in looking for its uniqueness and significance as a post-exilic theological treatise. He identifies the major theological theme as the temple, from which all other institutions and personages gain their legitimacy. David is elevated and even idealized to some degree because of his priority on the temple and its cult. Solomon is the "chosen temple builder." Various other themes such as "all Israel" (כל ישְׁרָאֵל), the Davidic covenant, retribution, and continuity are all derived from the primary motif of the temple.

There is, however, an unfortunate hesitancy to see a messianic eschatology in *Chronicles* (p. xxvii), perhaps due to overstatements from scholars such as von Rad, Noordtij, Stinespring, Mosis, and others.

Braun has sought to accommodate most of the suggestions for the date of the book, including Freedman's 515 B.C. date, as well as the traditional suggestion of 250 B.C. This, of course, is accomplished by the suggestion of various layers or hands involved in the composition. Cross's three layered approach is received favorably and expanded. Accordingly, Williamson's commentary should be used as a counterbalance to Braun's discussion.

One of Braun's major premises, based on the work of Lemke, is the superior value of the Chronicler's own composition in determining theological *Tendenz* over texts for which *Vorlagen* are available. However, one must express caution here. Lemke has failed to consider that *choice* of text is tendentious (cf. Talmon's discussion of OT textual history). Thus each section in the Chronicler's composition must be considered on its own merits and integrated into the whole. Further, this premise has led to some imbalance in the commentary. For example, the pivotal text of 1 Chronicles 17 (synoptic to 2 Samuel 7) is given rather cursory attention, in contrast to a well-developed exegetical and theological study of 1 Chronicles 22 and 28.

Finally, in regard to the historicity of the Chronicler's composition, Braun properly cautions that the attempt to protect the reputation of the writer by tests of historical accuracy is to be considered "misguided" (p. xxiii). On the other hand, he asserts that we do not have purely Jewish midrashic literature. Rather, he prefers to use the term "narrative" or "story"—"history in the pregnant sense of the term (facts plus interpretation)" (p. xxiv). Certainly that premise is valid as it stands. However, in his discussion of "Speech, Sermon and Prayer in Chronicles" Braun suggests that rather than attributing these pericopes to the speaker adduced in the text, "the Chronicler himself is completely responsible for the contents . . ." (p. xxv). The speakers are cited in order to give "prophetic, royal, and ultimately divine authority to institutions and conceptions dear to his own heart" (p. xxv). This seems to go beyond the basic premise cited above. There is no reason to reject, as Braun does, the Chronicler's selection of historical sources with which he completely agreed. This maintains a basic historical integrity to the Chronicler's "story," yet allows him to craft his composition in light of his theological and polemical concerns.

Braun's work is a significant contribution to OT studies. Its major strength is that it takes seriously the theological and polemical interests of the Chronicler. At the same time, some of the critical methodologies and approaches used in this book will need to be carefully scrutinized by the more conservative scholar.

DAVID G. BARKER
LONDON BAPTIST SEMINARY

Ezekiel 1-19, by W. H. Brownlee. Word Biblical Commentary. Waco: Word, 1986. Pp. xlii + 321. \$18.95. Cloth.

Jeremiah, by Elmer A. Martens. Believers Church Bible Commentary. Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1986. Pp. 327. \$17.95. Paper.

Originally designed to be a two volume commentary on Ezekiel covering the natural two halves of the prophecy (1-24, 25-48), this portion was cut short by Professor Brownlee's untimely death. Because Brownlee was a distinguished scholar and recognized authority on studies relative to Ezekiel, the publishers opted for the publication of his notes on the first nineteen chapters of Ezekiel. The bibliographies and notes were edited for publication by Leslie Allen and Gerald Keown, and the Introduction for the commentary

was supplied by publishing Brownlee's article on Ezekiel in the revised edition of the *ISBE* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 2: 250–63.

The result is a book that is understandably disjointed yet one that preserves Brownlee's distinctive points of view on Ezekiel. Thus, Ezekiel's basic ministry is held to be not among the diaspora of the exile of Babylon (a later scribal error or editorial change) but was at Gilgal northwest of Jericho; reference to Tel Abib near the Chebar River (e.g., 3:15) has to do with a settlement that bordered the Wādī en-Nū'aima; the plain mentioned in Ezekiel's vision refers to the Plain of Jericho; and the "land of the Babylonians" (1:3; 11:24) becomes an interpretive revision from "to Gilgal." Therefore, in accordance with the frequent idiom of dispatch "set your face toward," Ezekiel visited personally many places in his homeland, as well as journeying to some surrounding countries, including several trips to Egypt. From Egypt, after the great vision of the restored temple and nation (40–48), Ezekiel, as a new Moses and conquering Joshua, led a group of returning exiles home to Gilgal (35–36) in the thirtieth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity in 568 B.C. (1:1). Also, Brownlee's well-known views of Ezekiel's cultic drama and religious festival (cf. pp. 123–24, 180–81), that Ezekiel was a mystic and visionary prophet of reform, have been reiterated and up-dated in this commentary while interacting carefully with others along the way.

Ezekiel was both a prophet and priest and, above all, a herald of national renewal. The prophecies that bear his name were largely edited by Ezekiel himself or a disciple. Although the process of compilation began quite early, it continued as late as the time of Alexander when a thorough revision took place (pp. xxxv–xl). The present canonical arrangement of the material covered by this commentary comprises the following portions: a section devoted to Ezekiel's commission as a prophet (1:1–5:17); several "oracles of doom for the land of Israel" (6–7); several units devoted to Ezekiel's vision of the captives' condition in Jerusalem (8–11); several prophecies relative to the exile and to true and false prophets and leaders (12–14); and a section dealing with such literary figures as parable (15), allegory (16, 17, 19), and proverb (18). Each of the major sections has several subsections whose original setting and process of composition are minutely discussed by Brownlee, who often notes a given pericope's indebtedness to literary units found in the other great prophets (e.g., Jeremiah, cf. 1:4–28 with Jer 1:4–10 [pp. 22–24]; "Second Isaiah," cf. 3:22–5:17 with numerous portions of Isaiah 40–55 [pp. 51–52]; etc.).

In contrast to Brownlee's sometimes complex and fractured analysis, that of his student, Elmer Martens, is a model of clarity and simplicity. Written in a popular style for a lay audience, the commentary on Jeremiah is nonetheless the fruit of Martens' own wide-ranging studies in OT theology in general and Jeremianic studies in particular, including a thesis prepared under Brownlee's direction.

Martens focuses on Jeremiah's fourfold message: judgment/deliverance, knowing God, covenant, and land, the same four themes that Martens finds to be key to the whole Old Testament (as detailed in his book *God's Design* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981]). Martens then proceeds with a consideration of the individual sections of the prophecy. Each section for discussion in the

book follows a consistent format: preview, explanatory notes, the text in biblical context (i.e., how that section relates to the larger canonical picture), and the text in the life of the church (applications of that portion as viewed by the church historically and/or lessons for the believing church of today).

The principle weakness of the commentary lies in Martens' superimposition of his grid of four key themes upon the Jeremianic corpus rather than proceeding on the basis of the book's own themes and development. Further, his position on the conditional nature of all of the OT covenants (pp. 23–24, 151, 294–95), and his contention that land "was shorthand for the abundant life" (p. 24) are both matters for strong contention and as presented in the commentary are questionable. Many will disagree with his suggestion that Baruch is the author of the full section 34–45. Further, while Martens' overview and outline of Jeremiah are often on target, he overlooks Jeremiah's literary device of bookending (cf. p. 298), hinging, and hooking (e.g., chapters 2–24 and 25–51 are two distinctly bookended sections punctuated with hinging chapters and hooking devices). Martens' research in Jeremianic studies (including compilational theory, cf. pp. 296–98) should have supplied an outline that owed as much to structural as notional considerations.

On the positive side, despite its designed simplicity the commentary does often reflect the author's careful preparation. Martens shows the relation of Jeremiah's motifs to the other portions of the Scriptures (e.g., pp. 149–50, 195–98, 207–8). His appended glossary of key biblical terms and themes is a concise and accurate gold mine of biblical information. His sections on the applicability of the text for the church and its believers give the book both a practicality and warmth that are customarily absent in more technical commentaries.

In sum, this commentary on Jeremiah is truly "a new tool for basic Bible study" that explicates the "message of Scripture and its meaning for today—Sunday school teachers, members of Bible study groups, students, pastors, or other seekers" (p. 9). It will doubtless have a good reception in the evangelical community for whom it was intended.

RICHARD PATTERSON
LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

The Archaeology of the Jerusalem Area, by W. Harold Mare. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987. Pp. 323. \$19.95. Cloth.

Excavations in Jerusalem during the past twenty-five years have produced much information on the ancient city. Accordingly, Harold Mare, president of the Near East Archaeological Society and director of the Abila Excavation, has organized this material into a clearly written book on ancient Jerusalem that should be useful to many levels of students of archaeology and biblical history. The ancient remains of Jerusalem are carefully explicated based on archaeology, the Bible, Josephus, and other ancient sources, taking into account the size of the city, the time span of its occupation, the intricacies of its history and religious traditions, and the difficulty of excavating in a modern city.

The title implies that this book is about more than just the old walled city, and indeed, Mare includes the Hinnom and Kidron valleys and the Mount of Olives. His scope does not extend, however, to such nearby sites as Tell el-Ful on the north or Ramat Rahel on the south side of Jerusalem. Though he includes a discussion of the names of the city, he neglects the Arabic *el-Quds*. And though he mentions the city's location on the ridge road, he does not explain that by straddling the ridge road, Jerusalem could sever communication between north and south, as in the days of the Jebusites.

In eleven chapters, corresponding to the major historical periods, the archaeological features of the city are capably described and interpreted, including such difficult matters as the location of the Pool of Siloam, the seven meter wall on the western hill, the problem of the three walls, the location of Calvary, and the evidence for crucifixion. On many issues, Mare does not particularly champion one viewpoint over another but tries to present each fairly. Thus, one often finds summaries of the writings of Saller, Kenyon, Mazar, Shiloh, and others. But Mare does a good job of bringing it all together. And he does not shrink from discussing topics that have failed to attract great popular interest, such as the Dominus Flevit tomb and the Byzantine churches.

In addition to a bibliography and index, the book includes a useful glossary containing mostly architectural terms. There is a chronological chart and a number of plans of important structures. But for the reader who has not visited Jerusalem, there may be some difficulty in getting properly oriented to the layout of the city, since the quality of the maps is lacking. The black-and-white photographs, however, are good and instructive. Finally, Baker Book House is to be thanked for putting a book of this caliber in a sewn, cloth binding.

ROBERT IBACH, JR.
DALLAS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

2 Corinthians, by Ralph P. Martin. Word Biblical Commentary, 40. Waco: Word, 1986. Pp. lxiii + 527. \$25.95. Cloth.

The gaps in the critical study of *2 Corinthians* are filling quickly. In addition to this work by Ralph Martin in the Word Biblical Commentary series, the following book length studies in *2 Corinthians* have appeared recently: Ernest Best's commentary in the Interpretation series; Victor Paul Furnish's commentary in the Anchor Bible series; Hans Dieter Betz's commentary on chaps. 8 and 9 in the Hermeneia series; and Charles Talbert's work entitled *Reading Corinthians*. The nearly contemporaneous appearance of these works has presented a drawback: Martin's work appeared too early to interact with any of the other commentaries cited above, or with Dieter Georgi's translated and slightly expanded work on Paul's opponents in Corinth.

Martin's work is clearly the most valuable of the recent studies on *2 Corinthians*. It is a comprehensive, coherent, and even treatment of this

valuable letter. Refreshingly, this work is at once substantive and well written.

The chief strength of this work is its depth. Particularly noteworthy is the correlation between the text of 2 Corinthians and the path charted by the commentary. The divisions in the discussion are informed by the ebb and flow of the text, not by some requirements for chapters of equal length. The divisions of the text are noted and explained so that the reader is able to place a discussion in its proper context. In the words printed on the dust-jacket, "while technical problems are exhaustively treated, Dr. Martin has given prime concern to a clear interpretation of the text as it stands."

According to Martin, "the key element in Paul's relations with this community may well be stated as reconciliation" (preface, p. x). This explains why the "Explanation sections have tried to bring out the pastoral dimension of the letter" (*ibid.*). Thus

it will be the aim of the following commentary to elucidate what those broken relationships between apostle and congregation were, and how Paul sought *in persona Christi* (as he says, 2:10) to call back these people to the apostolic standards of belief and practice as a way of repairing the breach, so restoring unity and friendship [preface, p. xi].

Martin's dating of 2 Corinthians is traditional (A.D. 56). He sees it as a work comprised of two letters: 1-9 and 10-13, composed in that order. Internal evidence suggests to him that the section contained in chaps. 10-13 is both a separate and a subsequent letter.

While Martin's views regarding the unity of 2 Corinthians are more positive than the critical consensus since Semler's day, it is unfortunate that he is forced to see two letters: 1-9 and 10-13. Regarding the difficult questions of structural integrity and unity arising from other portions, he writes:

the unity of 2 Corinthians can be defended against the charges that chaps. 8 and 9 are not compatible in their present configuration, that 2:14-7:4 is an interpolated paragraph, and likewise that 6:14-7:1 is a non-Pauline or anti-Pauline interpolation which is a "foreign body" (*Fremdkörper*) in its present canonical setting. The reasons given in the survey above, which discussed internal evidence, are buttressed by the internal evidence that no manuscript or patristic authority ever divides the epistle [pp. xlv-lxvi].

The external evidence has remained the same, and there are decent reasons for *not* separating 10-13 from 1-9.

The following studies are important additions to Martin's work: John Austing, "Introduction and Overview of II Corinthians," *Notes on Translation* 66: 2-19; Stanley Norris Olson, "Confidence Expressions in Paul: Epistolary Conventions and the Purpose of 2 Corinthians," Ph.D. diss., Yale, 1976; R. V. G. Tasker, "The Unity of 2 Corinthians," *ExpTim* 47: 55-58; and Marvin R. Vincent, "The Integrity of Second Corinthians," in *Essays in Modern Theology and Related Subjects*, Scribners, 1911, pp. 185-89. See also the many fine studies in 2 Corinthians in A. Vanhoye, ed., *L'Apôtre Paul: Personnalité, Style et Conception du Ministère* (BETL, 73), Peeters, 1986.

What Are They Saying about Mark?, by Frank J. Matera. New York: Paulist, 1987. Pp. ix + 114. \$4.95. Paper.

This little book is one in the series of "What are they saying about . . ." books published by Paulist Press. The series as a whole is well conceived; Matera's contribution is especially helpful.

The purpose is to give "a brief survey of what New Testament scholars have been saying about the Gospel according to Mark for the past twenty to twenty-five years . . . an introduction to some important areas of Markan scholarship which involved questions both theological and methodological" (vii). Matera's focus is on methodology and theology, especially since these are issues in the current climate. After discussing the life-setting of the historical Jesus, that of the early church, and that of Mark's community, Matera focuses on the major theological tensions, Christology and the role of the disciples and discipleship. Then he turns to a historical survey of methodologies, moving from source to form to redaction to rhetorical to literary criticism. His own views are admirably suppressed, being brought in (usually) only at the end of each chapter.

The strengths of this book are: in a very short span, Matera has ably given an overview of the central issues. Matera is clear and easy to follow. His discussions of Wrede's *Messianic Secret*, Mark's Christology, the role of the disciples, etc., were all illuminating. Matera has carefully synthesized each author's position. Though one could wish for a more balanced picture of some of the topics, the topics themselves were not on the periphery of Markan studies (though they may be on the periphery of *Mark*—as Ernest Best suggested with reference to Christology [*Mark: The Gospel as Story* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1983) 79–80]). Matera provides information, synthesis, and direction with few critiques. If one wants to find out what they are saying about Mark, this is the book to read.

It is important, however, to note Matera's presuppositions. Markan priority and the existence and use of Q by Matthew and Luke are boldly assumed. Though holding that Mark was a 'conservative redactor' (i.e., one who passed on the tradition about Jesus without altering its essence), Matera still would not see all of the gospel narrative going back to the historical Jesus. This is evident by his lack of interaction with material which is more conservative in nature (e.g., no mention of a date earlier than c. A.D. 66 is suggested) as well as by his neglect of Peter as a major source when he discusses source criticism (58–62; it should be noted here that Matera begins the chapter with Papias' statement about Mark's connection to Peter and Rome, then ignores it in the subsequent discussion); more explicitly this is seen in Matera's comment about Mark 13: "the author is probably writing during the period of the Jewish War (66–70) with an intuition that the city's destruction is at hand." Matera has some respect for patristic tradition (regarding Peter's relation to Mark and the Roman destination) but is agnostic about using the present tools to recover the historical Jesus; yet he sees value in the use of literary/rhetorical criticism in the study of Mark.

The weaknesses of Matera's work are several. In two senses, Matera has not been synthetic enough: though he recognizes the lack of consensus among

Markan scholars, he rarely points out what seem to be the obvious reasons for disagreement; and in discussing methodologies, Matera fails to make clear that the history of Markan (and gospel) studies is moving from source to literary criticism. Though Matera hopes that literary criticism will resurrect the quest for the historical Jesus (92, 95), he has not addressed why scholars have moved in the direction they have. Further, as Matera admits, his review of scholarship is highly selective. There is almost no discussion of Marxsen (on redaction); none of Quesnell (on literary criticism); none on a date of Mark earlier than 66; nothing but assumption on Markan priority (but cf. the recent works by Orchard, Reicke, Farmer). Even the core theological issues (viz., Christology, disciples) are treated only on one level. Perhaps the greatest weakness, however, in Matera's book is his disregard of the problem of presuppositions.

Overall, this book supplies an excellent entrée into current Markan studies. For those who are puzzled by scholarship on the second gospel, *What are they saying about Mark?* will provide helpful information.

DANIEL B. WALLACE
DALLAS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Tragedy in Eden: Original Sin in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards, by C. Samuel Storms. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985. Pp. xii + 316. \$12.75. Paper.

This carefully documented work, a revision of a doctoral dissertation at the University of Texas-Dallas, is a significant contribution to American Christianity. Storms's detailed evaluation of Edwards's position on original sin is one of the most valuable treatments of New England theology available. The presentation is a balanced assessment of Edwards's position, in the context of biblical data as well as wide-ranging sources from Perry Miller to B. B. Warfield.

Storms examines the question of Edwards's dependence upon Lockean philosophy. He concludes that Edwards listened to and learned from Locke and other Enlightenment thinkers, seeking to be relevant without compromise. Following the review of this important background question, Storms leads the reader through the attack on Edwards's theology by John Taylor. Taylor's attacks were based upon a quasi-Arminian theology with universalist tendencies. Edwards's *Treatise on Original Sin* was primarily a response to Taylor and the Arminian and liberal church leaders of his day. Edwards attributes Taylor's theology to a soft position on biblical authority and Storms concludes that Edwards's arguments were orthodox and biblical. Storms carefully demonstrates that in Edwards we have the spirit of Puritanism and with Taylor we see the spirit of the Enlightenment. Thus the obvious conflict.

Storms's fourth chapter is one of the better defenses to be found to objections raised to the Reformed/Puritan position on original sin. In this section he attempts to handle the three problems of: (1) free will, (2) God and

evil, and (3) morality of imputation. Whether one agrees with Storms's position (Edwards's position?), it is a strong apologetic for Reformed theology.

Edwards's position failed to handle the problem of original sin because of its implications for placing guilt on God. Nevertheless, Edwards's arguments are tightly reasoned and extremely sophisticated. The major contribution that Storms makes is to point the way through the complexity of Edwards's position. Storms is careful to note where he differs with Edwards while carefully evaluating the differences. Perhaps his criticisms can again help with one of the tougher questions of Christian theology.

Storms has made a significant advancement in the study of Jonathan Edwards and New England theology in general. The mind of America's greatest theologian, Jonathan Edwards, can now be understood more clearly.

DAVID S. DOCKERY
SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Reforming Fundamentalism, by George M. Marsden. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987. \$19.95.

Tragedy, comedy and drama are terms usually associated with fiction and the theater. George Marsden, however, has written a history of a twentieth century educational institution which is as engaging as a good novel or entertaining play.

Selected by the administration of Fuller Theological Seminary to write the history of that school, Marsden has the advantage of being an outsider with reference to the seminary but an insider with regard to evangelicism. The Professor of Christianity in America at The Divinity School at Duke University has chronicled superbly an era of change, challenge and conflict within fundamentalism and the development of a new evangelicism, with Fuller Seminary as the center of the focus. That school is an appropriate subject for such a history due to its original ties with fundamentalism through its founder, Charles E. Fuller, and its status as the leading institution in the new evangelical movement for forty years. Stalwarts such as Carl F. H. Henry, Harold J. Ockenga, Edward John Carnell, William LaSor, George Eldon Ladd and Daniel P. Fuller helped to shape the evangelicism of the mid-twentieth century.

The drama, according to Marsden, "is found in the struggles of reformers to change a movement and yet still remain loyal to it" (p. 9). The reader must decide how well the seminary succeeded. It is evident that Fuller Seminary has undergone significant change in its four decades of existence. The author's thorough research and careful presentation give the reader confidence that the story is as thorough and factual as it is well told.

Marsden discusses the hurdles encountered in getting the institution started—the problems of functioning with an absentee president, the difficulties of Presbyterian faculty members receiving recognition from the Los

Angeles presbytery, the developing dissatisfaction with the doctrine of biblical inerrancy as defined by fundamentalists. The climax of those problems, "Black Saturday" and a rewriting of the doctrinal statement, as well as the development of new ones in the "Signs and Wonders" class under the guidance of John Wimber, are carefully recorded. Though the book has its emphasis placed on the first twenty years of Fuller, the last two decades are surveyed satisfactorily in an "Epilogue" and a "Sequel."

Tragedy in the seminary's history can be found in the contention which arose between fundamentalists and the new evangelicals of Fuller. The most tragic figure is Edward John Carnell. A Harvard graduate who sought to gain a hearing and respect in liberal theological circles, Carnell found little response from those he hoped to persuade while coming under a barrage of criticism initiated by fundamentalists. The road to his psychological collapse and untimely death was paved with conflict with those militants who were offended at Carnell's compromise. This was the lot of the professor judged to be the most popular during his tenure at Fuller.

A lighter side is also evident in the seminary story. In the tense academic setting, one especially busy professor placed a message on his door: "You have a busy schedule. So do I. I don't want to make yours any worse. So don't come in" (p. 129). Wilbur Smith provides comic relief with his "harumphs" and his uninformed prayer of thanksgiving on the very day the faculty faced its most serious internal confrontation.

Studies of the various professors are handled in commendable fashion with appropriate charity, empathy and criticism. The abundance of pictures throughout the book enhances its excellence. A few corrections need to be made in future printings. "Extra-denominational" is misspelled (line 19, p. 119) and Carl Henry's six volume *God, Revelation and Authority* is identified as containing five volumes.

There is much food for thought in this work. The seminary which had a solid financial basis through the ministry of Charles E. Fuller, in its early years failed to build a constituency to which it would be held accountable. Marsden develops this problem well. The question of theological integrity is a critical one and it is hoped that the Fuller Seminary example will be instructive to others facing similar problems. The pains experienced in reforming a tradition can be many and the cost must be counted and problems anticipated. The conflicts between fundamentalists and evangelicals have hurt the testimony of the body of Christ and the Fuller story is filled with such conflict.

Two possible responses lead in unfortunate directions. One can, as a result of reading this book, become more entrenched in one's attitude of bitterness toward either "unloving" fundamentalists or "compromising" evangelicals. A more desirable attitude, however, out of concern for the testimony of the body, would be to seek creative ways to hold both the goal of unity and the perpetuation of doctrinal purity and intellectual honesty.

RONALD T. CLUTTER
GRACE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Latimer: Apostle to the English, by Carla H. Stuart. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986. Pp. 348.

Clara Stuart, a professional writer from Mississippi, spent five years in research and writing this portrait of one of England's most noteworthy Protestant Reformers. "My aim," she wrote, "has been to make him live and breathe and become as real as a reader's closest friend in daily life" (p. 7). She has written a vivid and engrossing account of Latimer's career, but in her desire to make him seem as real as her readers' contemporaries, Miss Stuart has had to resort to some imaginative reconstructions. This, consequently, is not a scholarly biography but rather what might today be called a docudrama. It is filled with conversations among sixteenth century ecclesiastical figures as well as reports pertaining to their mental processes and emotional states. In those areas documentary evidence is scant, so the author has taken the liberty of filling in the gaps. In most cases the material seems plausible, but readers should know that, at those points, they are dealing with drama rather than history.

Hugh Latimer was one of the greatest preachers of the English Reformation, and Clara Stuart has given great emphasis to his pulpit ministry. She likewise has depicted him correctly as a leader of great compassion for the poor and a courageous martyr. The account of how Latimer met his death during the reign of Bloody Mary is especially moving to read.

Perhaps the most significant feature of this book is its accounts of ecclesiastical politics in a state church. Readers who keep this in mind should come away with an enhanced appreciation for free churches in a free state, as in the United States.

Although scholars will find little of value in *Latimer*, the general reader should enjoy it and find the career of its subject an inspiration. It would be a fine addition to public and church libraries.

JAMES EDWARD McGOLDRICK
CEDARVILLE COLLEGE

The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art in the Twentieth Century, ed. by Samuel T. Logan, Jr. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1986. Pp. xv + 463. \$16.95. Cloth.

This book is the result of asking thirty pastors and scholars for their analyses of the deficiencies in today's Reformed pulpit. The contributors, all in the Reformed tradition, reflect the results of the survey and include such men as J. I. Packer, R. C. Sproul, James Montgomery Boice, and Edmund P. Clowney.

Although eighteen different authors contribute to the volume, the book has a consistent style throughout and is a model of effective editing. The references within various chapters to similar materials in other chapters are especially helpful to the reader. However, this does not imply that the book is easy reading. It is both weighty in content and demanding in style. And the

use of technical terms that may not be quickly recognized by the average pastor may tax a preacher's determination to complete it.

The introduction to the volume, by J. I. Packer, answers the question, Why preach? Packer effectively sets forth six problems with contemporary preaching, followed by a lengthy description of what preaching is, both negatively and positively. He details why we should continue to preach, from an objective perspective of theological reasons to a subjective perspective of the inner convictions a preacher must have. Any preacher who doubts the validity of preaching will do well to consider Packer's words.

The discussion of the minister's call presents the conviction that God does indeed call a man to the ministry. Unfortunately, the chapter has no significant interaction with the biblical word for call nor with the current notion that there is no specific call to the ministry.

A serious deficiency of the first part of the book is that none of the chapters deal with the biblical texts of 1 Timothy 3 or Titus 1. Furthermore, little attention is given to any significant data in the Pastoral Epistles. This is a surprising oversight in that the purpose of part one is to set forth truths which relate specifically to "The Man."

Chapter 6 stresses the use of the OT and NT in preaching but unsuccessfully differentiates between properly seeing Christ in the Old Testament (through the use of symbolism and typology) and improperly allegorizing and moralizing.

In the chapter on hermeneutics and preaching a stress on Covenant theology emerges. Consequently, some difference of approach is detected: "If the proper interpretive method is trinitarian in character [which the author espouses], the exclusively or even predominately Christocentric interpretation must raise serious questions" (p. 227). This stands in possible tension with the position in chapter 6 of preaching Christ from all the Bible.

The discussion of rhetoric in chapter 11 was disappointing in that its interaction was limited. Although many standard rhetoricians are considered, including the Greek Aristotle and Demosthenes, the Roman Cicero and Quintilian, and the Christian Augustine and Calvin, there is no attention given to modern rhetoricians, such as Kenneth Burke or Richard Weaver, the latter being very helpful for the development of a rhetoric of preaching. To end a discussion of the preacher as rhetorician with Calvin is to ignore a great body of current rhetorical literature that is both helpful and stimulating.

Several significant elements were missing from the book. First, a concluding chapter would be most helpful. The volume stops abruptly without a conclusion to balance off the excellent introduction. Moreover, no indexes are in the book. A scripture index would be a minimum; a subject index would be advantageous; and an index of persons and bibliography would add even more to the usability of the volume.

Perhaps the most crucial omission in the volume is the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching. Although He is alluded to (e.g., "the all-important element of the unction and anointing of the Holy Spirit upon the preaching of the Word" [p. 302]), this important subject is never directly addressed.

In a book of this size a few errors are nearly inevitable. On p. 157 the word "of" appears in the long quotation from Jonathan Edwards where it

should be "or," and on p. 428 the word "compliment" should be "complement." Furthermore, a footnote at the beginning of chapter 14 states that "All citations (in the chapter) are to the New International Version unless otherwise stated," but several of the citations are not from the N.I.V. and they are not so noted (e.g., Matt 26:64 and Rom 1:16 on p. 371, Rom 11:33 on p. 373, Eccl 12:9 on p. 375, etc.).

Although this book has several shortcomings, it can still be recommended. The challenge it presents, the high view of the Word which it espouses and the honored position it gives to the proclamation of that Word make it a worthy volume for the pastor and prospective pastor.

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GRACE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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